The University of Alberta

Personal impact of residential school experiences on First Nations people.

by

Yvonne Lucienne Halkow ©

A thesis

submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of Master of Science

in

Family Studies

Department of Human Ecology

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Personal impact of residential school experiences on First Nations people submitted by Yvonne Lucienne Halkow in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Family Studies.

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Abstract

This is a qualitative, interpretive study that explored the memories of residential school experiences provided by eleven First Nations participants. Personal interviews were conducted, transcribed and analyzed for common themes. Narratives were written from each participant's interview transcript and related stories about residential school experiences using their own words for the most part. Discussion of the findings was organized around the interpretive framework of the symbolic interactionist perspective.

Three common themes emerged: a) having no choice: exemplified by participants reports about the institutional nature of residential schools and the maltreatment participants experienced, b) emotional pain: expressed by participants related to their experiences, and c) survival skills: employed by participants to deal with residential school life. Incongruencies inherent in the differences between First Nations culture and Euro-Canadian culture appear to have resulted in the formation of incoherent, confused self-definitions by First Nations people who attended residential schools. Quotations from participant narratives highlighted these themes.

Participants' memories of their residential school experiences were found to be similar to other accounts of residential school experiences related by First Nations people, providing validation to the findings of this study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In this thesis, I explore the memories and personal meanings that eleven First Nations people related about their childhood experiences at residential schools. First Nations, Native, Native American, Indian, American Indian and aboriginal are terms used interchangeably throughout this thesis to refer to North American Indian people.

The symbolic interactionist perspective provides the interpretive framework for this qualitative study. This perspective focuses on finding meaning in participants' *own* descriptions of their *own* residential school experiences. Since these experiences occurred during childhood, symbolic learning and the reflexive nature of the ongoing evolution of self definition provide a solid framework on which to discuss findings of the study. Culture and cultural differences are also important aspects of these experiences.

Historically, the relationship between Native Americans and Euro-Canadians evolved over a period of about four hundred years from an initial state of harmony and equality to a state of inequality, with Euro-Canadians having control over First Nations people in the latter 1800's (Dickason, 1992; Miller, 1989).

The Indian Act of 1876 provided the political impetus for development of the residential school system on the Canadian prairies: the first industrial residential school opened in 1883 at Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan to train First Nations teenagers in trades that would enable them to join the Canadian labor force (Titley, 1986). Residential industrial schools were generally unsuccessful and costly, and eventually gave way to residential boarding schools that recruited students at a much younger age (Scott-Brown, 1987).

At that time, federal government policy espoused the notion of assimilation of First Nations people into Canadian society so that First Nations people could take advantage of modern knowledge and technologies to improve their lives, but also to replace what was perceived as a *savage, heathen* culture with Euro-Canadian culture which was presumed to be intrinsically superior. Also, at about the same time, the federal government signed treaties with most Native American leaders on the prairies. These treaties promised First Nations people various items, for example, land reserved for their personal use, a medicine chest, yearly monetary payments to each person, and schools to educate their children in the ways of Euro-Canadian society.

To that end, residential boarding schools were built for First Nations children from the age of five to sixteen, usually quite far away from the reserves where First Nations people lived. The government delegated management and educational responsibilities to church missionaries in exchange for federal funding on a per capita basis. That is, the more children each residential school could enroll, the more money church missionaries were given to run the school. In many cases, the per capita funding was inadequate to cover basic costs incurred by the missionaries.

In 1894, school attendance became mandatory on the Canadian prairies and many First Nations children were removed involuntarily from their families and communities and taken to residential schools. They were forced to stay at the schools and were allowed very little contact with their families. Native American children stayed at a residential school for approximately ten months of the year. The other two months, usually during the summer, were generally spent in the family home unless the child had no family. If that were the case, the child stayed at the residential school all year. Summer holidays presented a problematic situation for both parents and children, especially language. While the language that students were expected to speak within residential schools was English, some parents and grandparents were either unable, or unwilling, to speak English. Those who were unwilling to speak English did so for the good of their children; they did not wish to interfere with the teachings of the residential school personnel.

First Nations children experienced a very different culture than their own within the residential school system. Many could not speak English when they arrived at these schools. Popular European childrearing attitudes of that time were also very different from First Nations childrearing attitudes. As well, the institutional nature of residential schools provided a cold, emotionally distressing substitute for the warm, community based, traditional First Nations family.

Recently, there have been many public disclosures about abuses inflicted on Native American children in residential schools; abuses that have haunted Native American people for many years (Urion, 1991). These abuses included neglect, physical and sexual abuse, as well as emotional abuse (which also encompasses the previously mentioned abuses). These existed in the form of prolonged separation from family, derision of cultural identity, and being forced to live a rigid, regimented lifestyle with culturally opposing values and behaviors. Some First Nations people have laid blame on the residential school system for problems facing First Nations individuals, families and communities today (Bird, 1995/96; Bull, 1991; Hodgson, 1992; Ing, 1991; Medicine, 1987; Sluman & Goodwill, 1982).

By the 1950's the government had closed down most of the residential boarding schools and built day schools in Native American communities. Since then, Native American children have been able to remain with their families and attend day schools, or provincial schools, in or near their own communities. In the 1970's many First Nations communities were given some control of education in their own community schools.

Residential schools on the Canadian prairies existed from the late 1800's to the early 1960's. While they were relatively unsuccessful in destroying Native American culture, the same may not be said about the impact of these schools on many Native American individuals and families. The toll of residential schooling in human suffering appears to have been great.

Memories of residential schools continue to haunt many American Indian people today. It is these memories that I propose to further examine in this study to see what common themes emerge, and to determine if these memories are similar to those of other First Nations personal accounts of residential school experiences.

The Research Problem

As a mental health professional who has provided counselling services to First Nations people in both rural and urban communities in north central Alberta over the past seven years, I have often wondered how this particular group of people seemed to be in such a state of personal and interpersonal chaos. From the life stories that I have been told by the majority of clients, it seemed to me that living in crisis was a normal, everyday state of affairs for many First Nations people. While the effects of such problems as substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, spousal assault, sexual assault, general assault, accidental deaths and suicides, on individuals, families and communities appeared to be devastating, many of these First Nations people appeared to take such things for granted. This was the first of the contradictions that seemed to occur in the lives of First Nations people that I met.

As I learned more about traditional, pre-European Native American culture (Attneave, 1977; Brant, 1990; Dempsey, 1979; Dickason, 1992; Dion, 1979; Ing, 1991; Mandelbaum, 1970; Meili, 1991; Milloy, 1990; Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, 1986; Whitecap, 1987), it seemed to me that these circumstances did not reflect the traditional way of life that, of necessity, had to be relatively functional to ensure the survival of band members in the often harsh Canadian climate.

As I tried to learn more about this remarkable transformation of once self-sufficient people, I looked at research that had been done in this area. Most studies focused on measuring the amount or number of social problems in Native American communities by means of secondary information (Fischler, 1985; Lujan, DeBruyn, May, & Bird, 1989; White & Cornely, 1981), and then speculating on the sources of these problems without actually talking to the people that were being studied. More recently, in the last decade or two, researchers have started to look at the experiences of First Nations people who attended residential school in response to either personal involvement or to public accounts of residential school experiences (Assembly of First Nations, 1994; Bull, 1991; Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991; Four Worlds Development Project, 1984; Gresko, 1986; Haig-Brown, 1991; Ing, 1991; Martens, Daily & Hodgson, 1988; Medicine, 1987; Persson, 1986; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1992).

As I continued to read, I noticed that one change factor in Native American traditional lifestyle seemed of major importance and impact. This was the colonization of North American land and of Native American people (Berlin, 1987; Dickason, 1992; Dion, 1979; Four Worlds Development Project, 1984; Friesen, 1984; Miller, 1989; Titley, 1986). The major thrust of this colonization seemed to have been the creation of reservations wherein Native American people were segregated from the European settlers, and the subsequent establishment of a residential school system. The residential school system separated Native American children from their families and communities. These children were segregated for nine or ten months of the year so that they could learn European ways, and become part of a society that really did not want to accept them.

The main objective of the federal government of the time was assimilation of First Nations people into the emerging Canadian society. Unfortunately, it was unknown to the government or missionaries what impact familial separation, institutionalization, or foreign values and way of life would have on First Nations people. It appears to me that many aspects of the above factors are still not fully understood, even though studies such as Persson (1980), Bull (1991), Cariboo Tribal Council (1991), Ing (1991), Haig-Brown (1991), and Assembly of First Nations (1994) have attempted to explore the personal meaning of residential school experiences for First Nations people by asking those people to speak on their own behalf.

It is my specific intention, therefore, to examine retrospective accounts of the experiences of eleven First Nations people in the residential school system as I believe that the meanings and perceptions of these experiences may provide information about some aspects of the current interpersonal problems faced by Native American people. Such interpersonal problems were almost unheard of in pre-European times in traditional First Nations culture. Of course, there are no written documents with which to verify this but it seems unlikely that a culture could survive under these conditions in the wilderness.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to gain a clearer picture of the personal meanings of the memories of residential school experiences for the eleven First Nations participants in this study by using a symbolic interactionist perspective to provide an interpretive framework to examine how those meanings may have had an impact on First Nations peoples' current perceptions of their world.

Understanding what meanings and perceptions these participants have about memories of their childhood residential school experiences may help us to gain a better understanding of the current plight of many First Nations individuals, families and communities. My research questions, therefore, are:

1. What do these First Nations participants remember about personal childhood experiences at residential school?

2. What common threads and themes emerge from the written narratives of the memories of participants' residential school experiences?

3. Are these common themes found in literature and research about other Native and non-Native people who have had similar experiences?

Importance of the Study

The findings of this study have the potential to increase cross-cultural awareness and understanding of the personal meanings and impact of residential school experiences on First Nations' people today. Exploration and interpretive analysis of the memories and meanings of residential school experiences for First Nations people based on a symbolic interactionist framework that may shed some light on the personal and interpersonal difficulties that currently affect many First Nations individuals, families, and even communities, today (Canadian Psychiatric Association, 1986 & 1987; Frideres, 1988; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989; Yates, 1987).

The study will make a contribution to the growing body of knowledge about residential schools and the impact of these schools on First Nations persons, their families and their communities. There are other studies that attempt to present the personal stories of First Nations individuals about their residential school experiences but few have used an existing theoretical framework for the interpretation of research findings. A unique contribution of this study to the current knowledge on residential schooling is in the discussion of findings in which the symbolic interactionist perspective is used as an interpretive framework for understanding the meaning and impact of residential school experiences.

This study may also serve to increase cross-cultural awareness and understanding, given the recent push towards self-determination and self-government by First Nations leaders. It is important for non-Native persons to appreciate some of the common history shared by First Nations and early Canadian people so that current political negotiations between the federal government and First Nations leaders make better sense to the general public.

This increased awareness and understanding may serve to inform policy makers and those who provide therapeutic services to First Nations individuals, families and communities so that they make more appropriate decisions in executing their vocations. In order to provide effective therapeutic interventions, it would be useful to be aware of and understand the subjective perceptions and interpretations that clients or participants have about their residential school experiences and about their lives since, particularly if there are common patterns of thoughts, emotions, behaviors, or any combination of these human features.

Last, but perhaps most important, this study will give voice to these particular participants so that others may become aware of their experiences and what those experiences meant to those people on a personal level. Over the past one hundred years, the voices of First Nations people have been quieted by government policies and actions. Residential school policy, especially, was designed to hush both the personal and collective Native American voice, and to mold and shape that voice into something it could not, and would not, be.

The study will provide an opportunity for these particular participants to have a voice; to have their experiences, and their reactions to those experiences, heard and validated. There is a potential for therapeutic effect for participants, although this is not a goal of this research. Also, other First Nations people who read this study may have their experiences validated.

Chapter 2: Related Literature and Research

This review of the literature provides background information for this study. The chapter includes a presentation of traditional Native American values and childrearing practices, an overview of the socio-historical context in which residential schools existed, a profile of the current problems commonly experienced by First Nations people, and an exploration of what other authors have written about residential schools.

It is useful to have some idea of how traditional Native Americans lived before the migration of Europeans to North America in order to see how much traditional behaviors and values have changed since that time. This review does not attempt to differentiate between American Indian nations, but provides examples of some traditional behaviors and values to be common to several First Nations groups, especially in terms of childrearing that have been recorded by many First Nations' authors (Brant, 1990; Erikson, 1963; Four Worlds Development Project, 1984; Inglangasuk, 1991; Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, 1986; Whitecap, 1987) and by non-Native historians (Dempsey, 1979; Friesen, 1984; Mandelbaum, 1970; Meyer, 1985; Miller, 1989; Milloy, 1988; Titley, 1986; Young, 1892).

Rapidly changing socio-historical and cultural factors have heavily influenced the development of Native American children (and adults) over the past several generations. Literature that provides a general cultural description of the traditional way of being of First Nations people before contact with non-Native Americans follows.

Prior to the European presence in North America and according to Native American academics, Native American people were traditionally cooperative and gentle people (within bands or groups but not necessarily between bands) with strict rules of conduct and a code of ethics that ensured survival of the group. All members of the community were given equal respect; caring and sharing between community members were expected and encouraged (Brant, 1990; Dion, 1979; Erikson, 1963; Four Worlds Development Project, 1984; Ing, 1991; Meili, 1991).

Native American people lived in harmony with the earth, taking only what they needed to survive (Brant, 1990; Four Worlds Development Project, 1984; Ing, 1991). Lee (1959) has found that similar values were shared by many other groups of 'primitive' peoples such as the Hopi, Winto and Navaho Indians, and the Tikopia of Polynesia.

Native American culture was organized around survival of the communal group. Traditional values and behaviors of Native American people resulted in cohesive, interdependent, and egalitarian communities (Gresko, 1986; Mandelbaum, 1970).

In pre-European times, Native American parents and grandparents seemed not to have been culturally predisposed to child maltreatment and have been portrayed as caring, affectionate and patient, developing close bonds with their children and with other members of extended family and community (Attneave, 1977; Berlin, 1987; Brant, 1990; Ing, 1991; Mandelbaum, 1970; Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, 1986; Sluman & Goodwill, 1982). "Elders were the libraries" (Whitecap, 1987, p. 35) and spent more time with children than their parents who were busy with basic daily activities such as hunting and food preparation. Grandparents passed down cultural knowledge to grandchildren through the oral tradition, and taught them how to behave through story-telling, modeling appropriate behavior and rewarding grandchildren for behaving appropriately (Dion, 1979; Gresko, 1986; Mandelbaum, 1970; Medicine, 1987; Sluman & Goodwill, 1982; Whitecap, 1987). Sexual knowledge was obtained through observation and peer discussion (Mandelbaum, 1970).

Following is an excerpt from an American Indian parent training manual developed by Native American people with the assistance of Native American elders for Native American parents (Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, 1986). It outlines some of the beliefs and behaviors involved in traditional Native American child-rearing:

> Many tribes believed that children were special gifts from the Creator. The tribal elders used praise and reassurance to encourage positive and loving relationships between parents and their children...
>
> Living in small communities where individuals depended on each other for survival, children quickly learned how to get along with each other. It was important to cooperate, to share, and to show respect for elders. Everyone understood and accepted the consequences for breaking the community's rules or limits. Discipline was carefully thought out to fit a child's need to understand a specific rule or limit.
>
> Nurturing was also an important part of traditional child rearing...no one person carried the whole burden of raising a child. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins were always nearby to help when parents had other responsibilities...
>
> Through the telling of stories and legends, children learned about proper relationships with other people and the environment. They were taught to be good listeners and to regard words as sacred. Children were also taught to be good observers and to understand the meaning of non-verbal communication...

> Children were respected and understood. Parent and child relationships were important and communication was well developed. Moral development received constant and careful attention. (p.4)

Similar descriptions of Native childrearing practices are given by Mandelbaum (1970) and Ing (1991).

All aspects of traditional Native American life were inextricably intertwined with cultural values and beliefs, and child-rearing was no exception. Children were viewed as a gift from the Creator, not as personal property, and as such had to be treated with gentleness and respect. They were given a great deal of freedom (Erikson, 1963; Magnuson, 1990; Mandelbaum, 1970; Robertson, 1972; Sluman 7 Goodwill, 1982).

Children were disciplined by parents, relatives and other community members with social approval, including praise, or with social disapproval, including teasing, shaming or ignoring (Erikson, 1963; Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, 1986; York,1990). No physical force or punishment was used, as Native American people believed that harsh treatment of children would result in the Creator reclaiming the child and taking the child away from the parent. More often than not, Native American children were positively reinforced to shape appropriate behavior and had appropriate role models to identify with; they lived and learned within an atmosphere that encouraged children to strive for appropriate behavior because it brought them pleasant reactions from other family and community members (Attneave,1977; CPA,1989; Four Worlds Development Project, 1988; Ing, 1991; Lee, 1959; Mandelbaum, 1970; Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute, 1986; Whitecap, 1987).

An understanding of the socio-historical context in which the residential school system existed is a necessary prerequisite to making sense of the drastic changes that have occurred since that time, leaving many contemporary Native American parents seemingly unable to adequately provide their children with appropriate care and guidance (Berlin, 1987; CPA,1989; Yates, 1987). To an outside observer, it might be inferred that interpersonal relationships in First Nations families and communities seldom reflect traditional values of mutual respect and cooperation; however, some still retain such values and rules of behavior.

At this point, it would be useful to describe some of the historical data related to Native-white relations in the early days of Canadian settlement to get some idea of the political, social and cultural factors involved in the emergence of residential or mission schools. The following section addresses the socio-historical context in which American Indian people lived after the arrival of Europeans in what is now Canada.

Friesen (1984) has identified four time periods depicting the ongoing relationship between Euro-Canadians and Native Canadians in his discourse on Canadian history. The initial relationship, in the first two hundred years between the 1640's and 1840's, was one of equality with Europeans, as described in the following section.

When Europeans first came to North America, Native American people helped them to survive the harsh climate and provided medicines to cure their ills (Dickason, 1992; Four Worlds Development Project, 1984; Miller, 1989; Young, 1892). American Indian people soon discovered the lucrative nature of fur-trading with the

Europeans and spent a great deal of time trapping. They were able to harvest an abundance of furs to trade with the white fur traders for food, clothing, guns and alcohol (at this time, used only as a luxury item); both parties mutually benefited from this arrangement. This lengthy fur-trading era was a time of relative goodwill and equality between Native Americans and Euro-Canadians (Dickason, 1992; Mandelbaum, 1970; Miller, 1989; Taylor, 1987).

During this period, missionaries such as the Jesuits had already traveled from Europe to teach and convert Native Americans to Christianity (Dickason, 1992; Dion, 1979; Titley, 1986). They found that the most successful ways of achieving this were to learn Native languages, and to incorporate positive reinforcement, modeling, music, art, tact, patience and gentleness into their teaching methods, rather than the popular European teaching methods of coercion and corporal punishment (Magnuson, 1990; Meyer, 1985). In other words, they had to adopt some Native cultural behaviors in order to be successful in teaching American Indian people.

The Methodist missionary, Rev. Egerton Young (1892), wrote about his mission at Norway House, Manitoba among Cree people from 1863 to 1873. He also reported a successful career among the Crees by behaving in ways that were culturally acceptable to these Native people. He respected their customs even though he wrote that he was "revolted" by some of their practices such as the men treating the women and female children as if they were slaves or animals. Young shared his provisions with the needy, was kind to all, and modeled his Christian teachings, agricultural skills and knowledge. He traveled great distances by canoe and dog-sled through perilous conditions to deliver his message to Indian people in distant areas. He cites many instances of being sought out by people from other areas. He reports that many Indian people were very happy to hear what he had to say and wished that he could speak to them more often. It appears that many were disillusioned by corrupt "sorcerers" who would strike fear in the hearts of their superstitious people to ensure that a good supply of necessary food and supplies would be given to them. Robertson (1972) states that Indian people shared so as to avoid incurring the wrath of others and that illness was seen as a sign of being punished for having done wrong (p. 288). Medicine men or "sorcerers" knew how to make poisons that could make people ill or even die, and cures that could make people well (Dempsey, 1979; Robertson, 1972), thereby maintaining a great deal of influence over community members.

Young (1892) reported that many Indians also had access to alcohol from fur traders in the area and drinking and violence was a problem for some (see also Dempsey, 1979; Dion, 1979). Christianity appeared to provide these people with a peaceful way of life and many embraced it wholeheartedly. They seemed to be especially happy to learn that they would be reunited in heaven with their deceased loved ones when they themselves died.

Many Indian people were baptized by Young and asked him to give them a new name. Many of these Christian Cree people went on to teach others what they had learned from the missionary. Mandelbaum (1970) found that Cree people often renamed their children but "the motive for renaming was not because the first name was unlucky, but that the child might receive additional supernatural aid with another name and namer." (p. 141) Belief in supernatural spirits was widespread in Native culture (Dempsey, 1979; Dion, 1979; Young, 1892)

Young (1892) reported that Cree syllabics were invented by a missionary so that Christian writings could be read and understood by Indian people when the missionaries were away. Each symbol or character of the syllabic system stood for a syllable of a Cree word. The Cree people were generally able to learn this system within two weeks and they were instrumental in teaching both syllabics and Christianity to other Native people.

In the early 1800's, mission schools were located on reserves (in Eastern Canada). Children attended during the day and returned to their families at the end of the school day. This approach was unsuccessful in assimilating American Indian children into white culture and the missionaries believed this was due to American Indian parents 'undoing' their teachings when children returned home after school each day (Miller, 1989; Titley, 1986).

This belief reflects the general educational ideology of that time in Europe: that parents negatively influenced the moral development of their children and therefore, children should be removed from the family home and educated in isolated boarding schools. Therein, educators had control over all aspects of the students' daily lives to induce a proper moral upbringing (Sommerville, 1990):

> Family and school together removed the child from adult society. The school shut up childhood which had hitherto been free within an increasingly severe disciplinary system, which culminated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the total claustration of the boarding school. The solicitude of the family, Church, moralists and administrators deprived the child of the freedom he had hitherto enjoyed among adults. It inflicted on him the birch, the prison cell - in

> a word, the punishments usually reserved for convicts from the lowest strata of society. (p.413)

The above ideology provided the basis for the establishment of residential schools for Native American children (similar in type to European boarding schools) that were not easily accessible to parents and relatives in Native American communities. The key difference for Native American children in residential schools as compared to European children in boarding schools, however, was exposure to a culture that held diametrically opposing values in relation to Native American values of equality of individual worth, mutual respect, caring and sharing, strong family bonds, cooperation, non-competition, teaching by modeling and story telling, flexible concept of time, interconnectedness with and reverence for all living and non-living things on earth, emotional restraint, non-interference, competence and mastery of survival skills, and non-violent discipline.

In the 1840's, the government's Indian policy underwent many changes, one of which was the establishment of residential schools for First Nations children (in eastern Canada) wherein they would be separated from the influence of their parents and communities for most of the year. These schools were funded by the government and were often run by Christian religious denominations such as the Methodists, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians as mandated by the government (Dickason, 1992; Friesen, 1984; Miller, 1989; Martens, Daily & Hodgson, 1988; Titley, 1986).

Europeans brought with them ethnocentric attitudes and values that were, for the most part, in opposition to Native American values. They generally considered

Native American people as inferior, primitive heathens who seemed to lack any semblance of culture and who had to be transformed and assimilated into the new non-Native Canadian society for their own good (Attneave, 1977; Miller, 1989; York,1990). European childrearing attitudes of the time are reflected in the following passage by Miller (1984):

> The advice regularly given in the old pedagogical manuals was to break the child's will at as early an age as possible, to combat his obstinacy, and always to impart to him the feeling that he is guilty and bad; they stressed that one should never allow the impression to arise that an adult might be wrong or make a mistake, should never give the child an opportunity to discover adult limitations, but that the adult should, on the contrary, conceal his or her weaknesses from the child and pretend to divine authority. (p. 216)

The government's primary goal in delegating responsibility for educating Native American children to missionaries, therefore, was to rid First Nations people of their culture in the most cost effective manner; to 'civilize' them so that they could become contributing members of white society (Dickason, 1992; Miller, 1989; Titley, 1986).

The method undertaken to achieve this end was to separate as many First Nations children as possible from their families and communities, to place them in residential training schools so that they could become 'civilized,' and to teach them useful occupations so that they could support themselves and become productive members in non-Native society (Miller, 1989; Titley, 1986). Children, rather than adults, were probably chosen to attend residential schools due to the prevailing European view of the time that children could be shaped and molded to become whatever was desired by those doing the shaping (Crain, 1992; Magnuson, 1990; Sommerville, 1990).

Schools run by missionaries had as their primary goals assimilation of the American Indian people into white society, which included conversion to Christianity (Miller, 1989; Titley, 1986) and teaching them skills such as farming and manual trades such as baking, leather crafting and blacksmithing (Martens, Daily & Hodgson, 1988; Miller, 1989; United Church Commission, 1935). However, few were ever able to gain employment in white society due to racial discrimination (Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1986; Campbell, 1973; Dickason, 1992; Miller, 1989).

Before 1830, the government had required the Indians as military allies and were treated with respect as powerful nations (Frideres, 1988; Miller, 1989). Between the 1840's and 1890's, however, this egalitarian relationship was challenged by the Euro-Canadians, and was virtually nonexistent by the 1890's (Friesen, 1984). After 1830, Native Canadians were viewed by the government as the "Indian problem" both socially and economically (Frideres, 1988; Miller, 1989).

After this time, trapping of smaller game to obtain furs to sell became more difficult due to the depletion of fur bearing animals. This left little opportunity for obtaining food in the traditional way and soon First Nations people became dependent on European goods for their survival and pushed them (Cree people in particular) westward to less populated areas (Dempsey, 1979; Four Worlds Development Project, 1984; Friesen, 1984; Taylor, 1987). Buffalo herds became virtually extinct in the late 1870's because of the massive buffalo robe trade and starvation was a common experience for Indian people on the prairies in the 1870's to the 1890's (Dempsey, 1979; Dickason, 1992; Dion, 1979; Robertson, 1972; Sluman & Goodwill, 1982).

Throughout this period, vast numbers of Plains Indian people died from diseases, such as smallpox, measles, influenza, scarlet fever and whooping cough brought over from Europe, for which they had no natural resistance, and from starvation due to the decrease in game (Dempsey, 1979; Dickason, 1992; Dion, 1979; Mandelbaum, 1970; Martens, Daily & Hodgson, 1988; Miller, 1989; Milloy, 1990; Robertson, 1972; Sluman & Goodwill, 1982; Young, 1892).

There were also many casualties of territorial battles fought between enemy nations (such as the Blackfoot and Cree) when some First Nations peoples found it necessary to gain access to enemy territory where game still flourished in order to survive (Dempsey, 1979; Dickason, 1992; Dion, 1979; Friesen, 1984; Mandelbaum, 1970; Milloy, 1990).

In 1857, the government passed the Gradual Civilization Act that made assimilation a formal government policy (Frideres, 1988; Miller, 1989). First Nations people were strongly opposed to assimilation and began to withdraw their children and their support from the residential school movement (Gresko, 1986; Miller, 1989; Titley, 1986).

The government responded in 1869 by passing the Enfranchisement Act that gave the federal government control over First Nations governments but Native American leaders still refused to comply with assimilationist programs such as residential schooling (Frideres, 1988; Miller, 1989). This Act also gave any First

Nations person the option to choose to become enfranchised as a Canadian with the right to vote. In exchange for this, they had to give up all First Nations status and rights. That is, in order to become a 'real Canadian' person, a Native person had to give up their cultural identity and any benefits associated with that identity including government given treaty rights and special status.

In 1879, Nicholas Flood Davin was sent by the government to investigate how the American industrial schools were set up and Canadian industrial schools were modeled after these American schools (Scott-Brown, 1987; Titley, 1986). The government of the time, therefore, thought that the best way to accomplish assimilation based on the American model, was to remove and isolate Native American children in residential schools away from the influence of their families and communities, and to prevent them from practicing their own cultural and spiritual ways of life. Segregation was, paradoxically, expected to enhance the process of assimilation.

Missionaries of several religious denominations happily took on the task of converting the savage American Indian to Christianity so that their souls could be saved (Miller, 1989). Some of these missionaries were very helpful in assisting some bands through a difficult era of change (mid 1800's and early 1900's) marking the disappearance of fur and game animals and the beginning of the settlement of Western Canada (Dickason, 1992; Miller, 1989; Young, 1892). Others were not. This was more likely due to differences in individual personalities, personal belief systems and personal motivations than particular religious orientation (individual differences in residential school personnel would probably also account for the differing experiences reported by First Nations people within the residential school system).

As more settlers arrived on the prairies during the 1870's and the number of fur bearing animals continued to decrease, the government had to make more land available for homesteading. Therefore, treaties were entered into with these First Nations leaders to gain access to, and use of, the land for new settlers. The treaties promised to provide several things to Native American people, including education and land reserved for Indian use (Daniel, 1987; Dempsey, 1979; Gresko, 1986; Taylor, 1987); the government gave approval to religious missionaries to establish mission or residential schools to that end on the prairies (Miller, 1989).

Treaties signed by prairie First Nations leaders between 1871 and 1877 promised that: "A school was to be maintained on each reserve" (Taylor, 1987,p.14). First Nations negotiators in Western Canada had asked that education and missionaries be added to the treaties and the government had agreed but told the First Nations people that they must approach the church officials (who were present at treaty negotiations) to ask for missionaries (Miller, 1987; Taylor, 1987).

First Nations leaders realized that their people would require education and new skills to cope with European settlers and their new ways (Miller, 1989). Some First Nations people were in favor of these schools because they believed that their children would learn skills that would enable them to survive in white society, but they had no intention of their children being assimilated into another culture (Dickason, 1992; Miller, 1989). They wanted their children, and communities, to benefit from learning European skills and knowledge, while keeping their cultural identity intact (Dion, 1979). They did not intend for their children to become part of Euro-Canadian society and lost to their own people and culture. This resulted in an ongoing struggle for Native parents and communities to obtain education in Euro-Canadian knowledge and skills, but at the same time to resist assimilation and maintain traditional cultural beliefs and practices. The major goal of the government was to assimilate Native people into Canadian society so that they would become enfranchised and no longer able to claim special status and treaty rights, which ultimately would reduce government spending on First nations people. Education appeared to be a secondary goal, as many residential schools provided little in the way of academic teaching and more in the way of practical work experience such as sewing, cooking, milking cows, gardening, farming and other activities designed to decrease costs at the schools and keep students busy.

In 1876, a consolidated Indian Act was passed. First Nations people were made wards of the federal government and the Department of Indian Affairs was created to oversee First Nations people in their own communities or reservations in order to gain more control over the activities of Indian people (Miller, 1989). Overt expressions of First Nations culture, such as Sun Dances or other spiritual ceremonies were banned by the government in the mid 1880's but First Nations people continued to practice these ceremonies in private, hidden from the view of Indian agents and police (Dempsey, 1979; Miller, 1989).

Each community was assigned an Indian Agent to supervise its residents on behalf of the Indian Affairs department. Indian Agents had administrative powers, directed farming activities, administered relief, inspected schools and health conditions, ensured compliance with government rules, could preside over band council meetings but could not vote (although they often influenced decisions made), and by 1881, they acted as Justices of the Peace and could prosecute and sentence offenders (Titley, 1986). It was the duty of the Indian Agent to ensure that children were delivered to the residential schools even if this meant applying coercive pressures to parents such as withholding rations or sending them to jail (Titley, 1986; York,1990). Community members required a pass from the Indian Agent to leave the reserve to visit their children at the schools, or to go anywhere off the reserve. Generally, the granting of these passes was discouraged as much as possible but First nations people still found ways to leave the reserve (Miller, 1989).

Friesen (1984) describes the relationship from the 1890's and 1940's between First Nations people and Euro-Canadians as one of inequality, wherein First Nations people were virtually controlled by Euro-Canadians. Attendance at residential schools became mandatory for First Nations children in 1894 and parents were legally sanctioned with fines or jail terms if they failed to give their children up for schooling (Miller, 1989; York,1990). Even so, many First Nations people resisted and suffered the consequences.

After the 1940's and to the present, Friesen (1984) states that there has been a political and cultural resurgence of First Nations people. First Nations people began to assume control of some schools such as Blue Quills in the 1970's (Bashford & Heinzerling, 1987; Persson, 1986). However, the main timeframe for the rise and fall of residential schools is in the aforementioned period of inequality from the 1890's to the mid 1900's. It was during this period of Euro-Canadian control over First Nations people that the residential school system flourished.

To this point, traditional Native American life (before European contact) has been presented as well as the socio-historical background that has illustrated the changing relationship between Native American people and Euro-Canadians from the 1500's to the early 1900's, and provided a backdrop for the emergence of the residential school system. It is important to now consider the present state of affairs of First Nations people in order to see the major socio-cultural changes that have occurred over the past three hundred years.

Currently, many Native American children are being raised in multi-problem Native American families in which alcoholism commonly appears in one or more family members and violence in families occurs frequently (Canada, 1993; Hodgson, 1992; Ing, 1991; Lujan et al., 1989; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989; White & Cornely, 1981). Those children judged to be at physical or emotional risk have been removed from their families and placed in foster homes where they sometimes suffer more abuse. The following literature illuminates some of the problems that First Nations children and adults in Canada currently face.

Statistics on First Nations people in Canada (Frideres, 1988) show several large deviations from total Canadian population statistics as follows:

	Native	Canadian
Infant mortality............	15.0/1000	7.4/1000
Crude death rate.............	9.5/1000	6.1/1000
Average age at death........	45.2	69.0
Male life expectancy........	62.0	72.0
Female life expectancy......	69.0	78.0
Deaths due to accidents,.... violence or poisoning	174.3/100,000	57.5/100,000
Commission of violent....... crimes (% of inmates)	48%	27%
Finished grade 12..........	<20%	75%
Substandard housing		
in need of major repair....	16.2%	6.5%
lack central heating.......	26.0%	9.0%
lack bathroom.............	13.1%	1.1%
overcrowded................	17.9%	2.3%

Table 2-1: Comparative statistics related to the Native Canadian population and the Canadian population as a whole

According to Statistics Canada (1993), 37 % of the First Nations population in Canada are under fifteen years of age compared to 20 % of the general Canadian population, and 7% are over fifty-five compared to 20% of the general Canadian population. Seventy-eight percent of First Nations people who live on reserves are concerned about unemployment, 73% about alcohol abuse, 59% about drug abuse, 44% about family violence, and 35% about suicide. Thirty-eight percent of First Nations people can speak an aboriginal language (mostly Cree and Ojibwa) but 93% would like to be able to speak an aboriginal language. Forty-six percent take part in cultural activities.

Seventy-six percent of Native American people in Canada derived income from wages and salaries but earned substantially less than the average non-Native (Frideres, 1988). Canadian Natives, generally, are disadvantaged in many areas of life relative to non-Native Canadians which increases stress and strain in First Nations families and contributes in no small way to the increased likelihood of child maltreatment (Berlin, 1987; Canadian Psychiatric Association, 1987; Finkelhor, Gelles, Hotaling, & Straus, 1983; White and Cornely, 1981).

However, Gfellner (1990) found that Native parents with post-secondary education had more liberal attitudes, were more confident in their role as parents and were seen as having good social supports as compared to non-Native parents with post-secondary education. Unfortunately, few First Nations people attain this level of education at present; however, the number of First Nations students attending post-secondary institutions has increased yearly since the 1960's.

A family violence survey of 271 First Nations people in Ontario by the Ontario Native Women's Association (1989) found that 80% of the respondents indicated personal experience of family violence. That percentage is approximately eight times the Canadian average. Respondents identified women as the victims of family violence 88% of the time, children 51%, husbands 12%, and Elders or friends 10% of the time. Husbands were the aggressor 84% of the time. Wives were the aggressors approximately 15% of the time. Twenty-four percent of respondents knew of cases in which family violence resulted in death, usually of a woman. My personal experience in counselling First Nations people would indicate similar trends in First Nations families in Alberta.

Dr. Clare Brant, a Mohawk psychiatrist from Quebec, speaking at the Canadian Psychiatric Association meeting section on Native Mental Health (1987), linked the frustration and deprivation that Canadian Native people experience with poverty, unemployment, substandard housing, education, and health care, lack of recreational facilities and programs, disorganization in band administration and social services, inadequate transportation, and lack of counselling services available to Native people. Dr. Brant states that the frustration and deprivation felt by Indian people results in lowered self-esteem which is expressed through anger (vandalism, family violence, child abuse, murder, and self-injurious acts) or withdrawal (truancy, absenteeism, dropping out of school, substance abuse, abandonment of family, divorce, child neglect, and suicide).

Because of inadequate or abusive parenting, many Native American children have been apprehended by Child Welfare and generally have not faired well within the Child Welfare system either. According to Bagley (1985), foster children commonly suffer emotional deprivation at the hands of foster parents who are not willing to become attached to these children because they are sure to be uprooted by Child Welfare repeatedly. The foster care system appears to parallel the residential school system in terms of government policy that resulted in the uprooting of Native children from their homes and families perceived by the dominant society as undesirable influences, and placing them in a foreign environment with emotionally distant and sometimes abusive foster parents. Many children had experiences in foster care that were very similar to residential school experiences. Since the 1980's, however, many First Nations communities have begun to administer their own child welfare programs with government assistance.

Bagley presents the diary of Richard Cardinal, a Native American teenager who hung himself outside his foster parents home on the 26th of June 1984 (his foster mother's birthday), to illustrate his point. Following are excerpts from Richard's diary as reprinted in Bagley's article:

On the occasion of Richard's fourth move to a new foster home at approximately *seven or eight* years of age, he wrote, "I didn't want no one to love anymore. I had been hurt so many times so I began blocking out all emotions and I shut out the rest of the world and the door would open to no one." (p. 65) In this foster home, he slept in a cold, damp basement and was not allowed to eat with the family, even on Christmas day, which prompted him to run away from the foster home. He was gone four days, then was caught and returned to the foster home; nobody seemed interested in why he had run away. He was *nine* years old when he first attempted suicide:

> I spent the rest of the winter here feeling lonely and depressed, and I began to seriously think about suicide. The first thing I attempted it, I used a razor blade to cut my arms but it hurt so much so I didn't try that again....After school, I would do my chores and sit in the barn and think and one day I was in there thinking, and it struck me I could kill my self now and no one would know until it was too late, and it just so happens that the bail I was sitting on still had bailer twine on it so I slipped it off and climbed up onto the rafter. After I had secured the rope I climbed down and placed some straw underneath the rope. I climbed on and stood up determined to go through with it. I said a short prayer to God to take care of my family. I placed the rope around my neck and kicked, my lungs felt like they were about to burst and my ears felt like they were melting right off my head. Finally I blacked out and was engulfed in a blanket of black.
>
> Unfortunately, I woke up. (pp. 66-67)

At the age of *seventeen*, however, Richard Cardinal was successful in ending his sad and lonely life.

Another poignant depiction of Richard's sad life is portrayed in the videotape, Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Metis Child (Obomsawin, Canell, & Verrall, n.d.), through interviews with various of Richard's foster parents and his brother, Charlie. In the background a voice-over of a Native American boy reads entries from Richard's diary entitled I was a victim of child neglect, as if Richard was speaking to the audience of his emotional pain and suffering. Richard had been in no less than twenty-eight placements between the ages of three and seventeen. Toward the end of his diary he contemplates his perceptions of love:

> It can be gentle as a lamb or ferocious as a lion... something to be welcomed, something to be afraid of... It is good and bad. I think I would not be happy with it, yet I am depressed and sad without it. Love is very strange.

At the end of the film, his brother commented that the provincial Social Services department had finally made an effort to reunite the siblings separated thirteen years previously... at Richard's funeral.

Dr. Brenda Wattie, Health and Welfare Canada, Medical Services Branch (Canadian Psychiatric Association, 1989) cites these federal statistics on Canadian First Nations people: Nineteen percent of homicides are committed by First Nations suspects and 15% of homicide victims are Native American even though only 2% of the total Canadian population is Native American. The suicide rate for First Nations people is three times the national rate. She states:

> Even allowing for small absolute numbers, such an enormous disparity in Indian/non-Indian suicide rates below twenty years of age indicates a serious situation in the antecedent years of childhood, and evidence is beginning to accumulate that there are high levels of depression among Indian children...particularly among girls. (p.311)

In summary, First Nations people seem to have many personal and interpersonal problems in their families and communities today. Traditionally, First Nations children were seldom subjected to the trauma of child abuse or neglect, and they were never institutionalized. One must wonder at what has contributed to such drastic changes in First Nations families and communities.

In the next section, excerpts from personal accounts of First Nations people who have attended residential schools will illustrate the nature of the residential school environment and the reactions that these First Nations people have had to that environment. Barman, Hebert & McCaskill (1986) provide an introduction to the nature of residential school life with a description of entry into that system:

> Native children were first separated from family and community which created severe loneliness. Then brothers and sisters were separated from each other within the schools. Children from the ages of six or seven, both boys and girls, were taken, en masse, from loving close-knit families and communities and put into a culturally foreign, strange and often hostile environment:
>
> When pupils entered residential school, they underwent admission procedures designed to dispossess them of their previous roles and isolate them from the reserve world. Children were either brought to the school by their families or, more often, were 'rounded up' by a priest and transported to the school. Upon entering the residence, the child's clothes were removed. After being bathed and deloused, he or she was issued a set of school clothing. After acquiring a uniform which was the same as that worn by others of the same sex and size, the child was given a number. All clothing, towels and eating utensils were marked with the number. (p.152)

A personal account of a First Nations person arriving at residential school provides a similar description:

> From the day my mother walked my brother, sisters, and I up to that ominously looming structure, I began to understand the depth of those black-robe's power and influence. Almost immediately, my mother's authority was undermined and subverted by a nun who authoritatively pushed her out the door and warned her not to get emotional about saying good-bye. While I cried and fiercely clung to one of my sisters the nun ran through the rules, which I never seemed to remember and was consequently punished for, and quickly showed us the rest of the school.
>
> Soon after, I was torn away from my sister and herded away to be 'scalped' by another nun, powdered with DDT (supposedly because all Indians were lice-infested), and then showered with severely hot water. Once we were stripped of all our remembrances of home, we were given the standard school-issue clothing and assigned to specific quarters. (Acoose, 1993, pp. 4-5)

First Nations children were told that everything about their American Indian culture and people was evil, bad, and stupid (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1986; Bull, 1991; Persson, 1986). These attitudes were often expressed by their Euro-Canadian caretakers with negative, rejecting words and behaviors. Discipline in residential schools was often harsh and humiliating to children who were used to being praised, teased or ignored by their family members to shape correct behavior.

These children were forced to remain at residential schools for about ten months of the year and visits by family members were not encouraged (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1986; York, 1990). They were exposed to a high degree of negativity and trauma on a daily basis for prolonged periods of time (Berlin, 1987; Hodgson, 1992).

An anecdotal description of discipline at a residential school by Maggie Black Kettle, a Blackfoot Elder, follows:

> At the age of seven, Maggie entered the convent, where cultivation of a meek personality helped her survive.
>
> We were punished if we even looked at boys. The nuns said, 'You'll have a baby if you talk to them.' At that time, they used horsewhips to strap us. I never did anything wrong to make them mad, but one time I was really scared. I saw this girl getting punished. She thought the sister was going to smack her, so she put her hand up across her face and she accidentally hit [the nun].
>
> Well, sister just ran to the priest in charge and told him this girl hit her in the face. Then they made us sit all around the room. We knelt on the floor. The nun had a big strap, and she started using it on that poor girl. We'd all be trying not to look but the sisters started getting mad. 'Look at her!' they said.
>
> That's why I get scared easy and if anybody gets hurt I get a really cold feeling in my stomach. I don't like to see anybody get hurt or somebody to be hitting another person. (Meili, 1991, p.73)

First Nations children were also subjected to prolonged separation from their parents and extended families, and many were maltreated by their caretakers, who were most often priests and nuns of various religious orders (Martens, Daily & Hodgson, 1988). Basil Johnston (1988), an Ojibway Indian who attended St. Peter Claver's School, (Spanish, Ontario) in his childhood, writes:

> Now, if the priests and brothers...could not extend the warmth, sympathy and affection that were necessary, it was because their system, the system of the Jesuits, prevented them from doing so. For upon entry into the Order of the Society of Jesus young men had to renounce the world and worldliness; they had as well to repudiate worldly feelings and demonstrations of emotion...In such a system and in the circumstances, it was easier for scholastics and priests to appear to be indifferent, insensitive to and even intolerant of human distress, real or imagined.
>
> Most of the boys were already hurt and wounded on arrival at the institution; to receive a blow, a kick, or a t'rashing merely aggravated and opened the sores and wounds...and rekindled resentment and enmity for prefects, priests, religion, church, authority, rules and regulations.
>
> The women, mothers in their early twenties and thirties, along with the grandmothers, must have suffered as much anguish as their sons and daughters. Many did not speak English, many had little more than Grade 3 education, and even those with Grades 7 and 8 could not understand the Indian Act and the powers that it conferred upon the Indian agent, who one day, any day, could come to a house to announce, 'We've decided that it's best for you and your children that they be sent to Spanish. There they'll well taken care of, clothed, fed and educated. Here, they have little to eat and little to wear. Get them ready.'
>
> The mothers and grandmothers cried and wept, as mine did, in helplessness and in heartache. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, that they could do, as women and as Indians, to reverse the decision of 'the Department.' Already they had suffered the anguish of separation from husbands; now they had to suffer further the anguish of being dispossessed of their children; later, they would have to endure alienation from the children who were sent away to Spanish. (pp. 7-8)

A collection of the voices of First Nations people telling about their residential school experiences is found in the book edited by Jaine (1993) Residential Schools: The Stolen Years. This is a variety of essays and poetry written by persons who attended residential schools or had indirectly felt the impact of residential schooling through relatives or other community members. Again, the actual stories these people tell are very powerful in conveying the nature of the residential school experience (Acoose, 1993; Bruderer & Jaine, 1993; Guss, 1993; James, 1993; Manuel, 1993; Sellars, 1993; Wassaykeesic, 1993).

An emotionally moving film called Where the Spirit Lives (Goldin, Jordan, Leckie, & Pittman, n.d.), was made for television and aired for the first time in the late 1980's. It portrayed the abduction by an Indian Agent of a sister and brother from their home and their transfer to, and lives in, a residential school. As with other descriptions of residential schools, this Catholic school was also militaristic and rigid, run by emotionally distant, often abusive nuns and priests. On arrival at the school, all children were deloused with kerosene, hair was cut short, and all were issued uniforms to wear. The film depicted physical, sexual and emotional abuse inflicted on the First Nations children entrusted to the care of the school personnel. Runaways were beaten on return to the school. The children's emotional and behavioral reactions to these circumstances were powerful in their portrayal.

Although there was a waiver at the end of the film stating that it was a work of fiction and any resemblance to any persons living or dead was purely coincidental, it was remarkably similar to virtually any account told by other First Nations people about their experiences in residential school. The main point of the movie seemed to be that despite all the trauma experienced in residential schools, cultural and spiritual faith helped the main character survive. Unfortunately though, this was not enough for one of the children at the school who died alone on the prairie after running away from the many abuses she had endured at the school.

The most evocative and enlightening sources of what First Nations adults experienced at residential schools during childhood, have come from attending gatherings where First Nations people have spoken about their residential school memories in person (Bull, Bull & Jebeaux, 1994; Inglangasuk, 1992).

Again, many similarities can be drawn between the content of these oral presentations and other accounts of residential school experiences written by First Nations people and others. The memories of these experiences that people reported include intense loneliness and homesickness, abuse and neglect at the hands of residential school staff, hunger, humiliation, degradation and shame (of themselves, their families, and their culture), anger, fear, sadness, suicidal thoughts, lack of control over most aspects of their day to day lives, and the highly structured, inflexible jail like existence.

In their adult lives, most reported continuing to feel shame about themselves and their culture. Many still carry the feelings of hurt, pain, anger, frustration, and despair that they experienced at residential schools. Some felt emptiness and an inability to relate to, or empathize with, the feelings of others. They commonly experienced disturbed interpersonal relationships. For example, not knowing how to be appropriate parents or spouses, or how to live peacefully within their communities. Many spoke about not learning how to be parents and of abusing or neglecting their children and spouses. Many turned to alcohol or drugs, perhaps as an analgesic to numb the personal pain that they carried within themselves.

Some have recently turned to learning their culture and have become involved in cultural activities as a way of healing themselves of the emotional and spiritual wounds inflicted upon them at residential schools. The effects described above have also been reported by other First Nations people who have attended residential schools (Bird, 1996; Inglangasuk, 1991; Johnston, 1988).

The following studies have addressed and obtained personal perceptions of some First Nations people regarding their residential school experiences.

King (1967) conducted a case study as a participant observer at a residential school at Mopass, Manitoba. This study explores life at the residential school and surrounding community. He observed the existence of a rigid daily routine, half day of classes and half day of chores, gender segregation, abuse (including "dishonesty, cruelty, and sexual deviance" p. 36), and poorly educated staff. Following are direct quotations of other observations King made:

> By the time children are in their third year at school, they simply prefer routine as the simplest way of coping with life. The part of learning for learning's sake is gone, replaced by a pragmatic gamesmanship. Decisions are detestable events unless one directly benefits from them. (p. 78)
>
> It was if they [children] themselves perceived not only two orders of reality functioning within the school - a non-Indian and an Indian - but even that the Indian reality was rigidly segmented into school Indian and nonschool Indian. (p. 79)
>
> [There is] minimal congruence of purposes, values, and perceptions, at the operating levels of interaction.... From his perceptions, the Indian finds it impossible to accept the social order and, at the same time, impossible to reject it completely. He therefore creates an artificial self to cope with the unique interactive situations. (p. 87)

Persson (1980) interviewed approximately fifty First Nations people about their experiences at Blue Quills Residential School. Her interviewees also reported a regimented activity schedule that included daily attendance at chapel, inspections, chores, and classes. Persson states that although Native people were opposed to the assimilationist policies of residential school, many have since used what they learned to defend, lobby for, and challenge federal government policy regarding, Indian rights. She also reports that despite government attempts to "civilize" Indian people, they have persisted in holding fast to their cultural heritage over the past hundred and fifty years.

Bull (1991) interviewed twelve First Nations people about their residential school experiences. Her interviewees reported both positive and negative aspects of residential school. They appreciated obtaining an education and making friends with children from other tribes and reserves. Close bonds were developed with others in the school as they had the residential school experience in common and helped each other get through their years in that system. All mentioned that they had been negatively effected by mistreatment experienced at residential school. Intense loneliness, homesickness and feeling all alone were reported. Fear of not knowing what to expect, of disciplinary beatings and public humiliation, lack of emotional involvement with staff, hunger, rigid environment and lack of freedom were other common experiences reported by interviewees. Those who ran away had their heads shaved and were severely beaten. Interestingly, half of her interviewees did not want their names used in the research because they had "guilt feelings attached to their revealing negativity and mistreatment by the establishment." (p.38)

The Cariboo Tribal Council (1991) conducted a community study to assess the effects of residential schooling on community members in order to plan for and implement community programs that might address relevant issues that arose. They found that treatment in residential schools was more physically and emotionally harsh than in nonresidential schools. Close to 50% of respondents reported having been sexually abused at residential school and long-term effects were similar to those experienced by non-Native persons who had been sexually abused. Women were more likely to exhibit violence towards their children and men were more likely to exhibit violence towards their wives than were parents and spouses who had not attended residential schools. Fathers who had attended residential school were less affectionate, less communicative in a supportive way, and less attentive to their children. They reported psychological effects as being more commonly associated with traumatic treatment during childhood in residential school than economic or social effects. Residential school attendees reported feeling less secure, less happy, and less able to develop appropriate interpersonal relationships than those who had not attended residential school. Those who had attended residential school appeared to have more positive feelings about their Native culture and identity than those who had not.

Haig-Brown (1991) conducted a study that involved interviewing First Nations people who had attended Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. She exposed culturally destructive policies inherent in the residential school system, as well as the questionable value that such a system had for First Nations people. The author used the voice of the participants to illustrate their experiences in residential school and their resistance to, and survival of, such a system.

Although Haig-Brown's focus seems to be on educational policy, her rich qualitative data also exposes a great deal of the personal pain and suffering endured by her First Nations participants who had experienced the residential school system firsthand.

Ing (1991) interviewed three people for her study on the effects of residential schooling on Native child-rearing practices. Although she approached several potential participants, many "felt they were not ready to discuss their residential school experiences yet." (p. 69) Those that participated reported much the same as did Bull's participants. Each of these three also spoke of being confused by attending residential school due to being exposed to two different, and often incompatible, cultures. Feelings of shame about being Indian, speaking Cree, taking part in traditional cultural activities, as well as of parents and grandparents that symbolized the source of these cultural expressions. Ing concludes that Native child-rearing practices have been eroded and altered through loss of language and the subsequent break in the transmission of cultural information about traditional child-rearing practices due to Native children not being allowed to retain their own languages in residential school. As well, they were not prepared to become parents as they did not see or experience traditional parenting behavior. The low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and lack of knowledge of appropriate interpersonal relationships did not prepare residential school 'graduates' for being effective parents and have created family relationships problems for many Indian people.

More recently, the Assembly of First Nations (1994) commissioned a study called Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nation Individuals. The researchers of this study interviewed thirteen First Nations individuals who had attended residential schools during their childhood. Findings of the study are presented using direct quotations from the interviews to illustrate main themes such as wounded children, trauma, surviving adults, and the process of healing. These are then reflected upon by the researchers in the summary and discussion. What participants had to say about their experiences was the most powerful aspect of this study.

Although these studies have also examined residential school experiences as remembered by a few First Nations participants, there is room for much more exploration of these experiences from other perspectives. It is my objective to provide a different perspective to the study of residential school experiences based on the symbolic interactionist framework in order to broaden the existing base of knowledge. The greater the information that can be generated on a human experience, the closer we can get to a useful understanding of that experience.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Interpretive Framework

This study is guided by the interpretive paradigm and by the general symbolic interactionist perspective. I will take an interpretive approach to this topic to develop a clearer understanding of the meaning and impact of residential school experiences in the lives of First Nations people.

This approach seems to best fit with my experiences and skills as a psychiatric nurse counsellor, and it seems to be an effective method for deriving meaning from peoples' lived experiences without having to reduce rich qualitative data to numbers and statistics (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Patton, 1990). Since my background is in psychology and psychiatry, I have chosen to focus on emotions, thoughts, and behaviors related by respondents in their stories of residential school experiences.

As a qualitative researcher, my personal ways of perceiving the world around me, and in particular participants' narratives of their residential school experiences, are derived from my own life experiences and personality, or definition of self. My training as a psychiatric nurse has a large influence on the way I perceive others thoughts, feelings and behaviors. I tend to empathize easily with other peoples' experiences and have approached the interpretive analysis of participants' narratives (data) in such a manner. I have tried to imagine what it was like for those people as children in a residential school setting given what they have told me and what I have read. My focus has also been more on interpersonal problems and resolving those problems, rather than on the political. However, in this study, I have found that the personal is most definitely intertwined in the political.

I will use interpretive, qualitative methodology for this study guided by the symbolic interactionist perspective. Below are the assumptions of interpretive methodologies (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) that this study relies upon:

1. Each person perceives reality differently and this perception is influenced by life experiences that occur within a particular context (this applies to both researchers and participants).
2. Human behavior cannot be predicted or controlled.
3. Meaning may be known; social life may be understood.
4. People may choose to change their behavior if they can gain an understanding of the meaning of that behavior and how it evolved from life experiences.
5. Understanding can be facilitated through dialogue and reflection.
6. Interpretive inquiry cannot be value free.
7. Interpretive inquiry is not theory-driven.

The assumptions of symbolic interactionism (Burr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979) that guide this study are:

1. Humans live in a symbolic environment as well as a physical environment, and they acquire complex sets of symbols in their minds through learning. Humans can learn, remember, and communicate symbolically, for example, language, gestures, inflections of voice, silence, etc.

2. Humans value; they form evaluative distinctions about symbols. They attach values to symbols, learned from those with whom they interact.

3. Symbols are important in human behavior. Humans decide what to do or what not to do based on the symbols they have learned in interaction with others and their beliefs about the importance of these meanings.

4. Humans are reflexive, and their introspection gradually creates a definition of self, a process of being aware of and defining oneself that is ongoing, ever changing and dynamic.

5. The human is actor as well as reactor, not just a passive recipient of external stimuli.

6. The infant is asocial, that is, without social awareness. Human nature is determined by the experiences peoples encounter and their reactions to those experiences, rather than a predisposition to act in certain ways.

7. Society precedes individuals. Humans are born into cultures, which are integrated sets of meanings and values, that make up societies; society is a dynamic social context in which learning occurs and the learner responds to what is encountered.

8. Society and man [the individual] are the same. Humans learn a culture and become that society; they experience strain when they encounter incongruities and conflict in their interactions. Societies inevitably have incongruity as change occurs, subcultural differences exist, and valued resources are scarce.

9. The human mind is indelible. Human behavior is a product of life history, of all experience, social and individual, direct and vicarious through interaction with others: newly acquired meanings and values are integrated with existing ones in a process of continuing modification.

10. Humans ought to be studied on their own level. This theoretical perspective places priority on the interpretive, defining aspects of the human mind.

Symbolic interactionism appears to fit well with the overall theme of this study, especially in terms of the importance of First Nations cultural symbols, meanings and values in the pre-school lives of children who attended residential schools and the subsequent strain of cultural incongruity between First Nations people and non-Native people as experienced within the residential school system. The reactive, reflective character of a child's learning and development of a definition of self is an important assumption in relation to the impact of early life experiences upon that development within the First Nations family and within the residential school system.

As well, the symbolic interactionist perspective assumes that humans are best understood through obtaining understanding of their own personal interpretations of the world from their own perspective. That is, it is important to study what people say about their life experiences, rather than inferring reasons for their behavior from outsider observations or other secondary sources of information.

Research Method

Selection of respondents.

Originally, eight First Nations adults (35 years or older) individuals who had attended a residential school were invited to participate in the research process. Each participant was free to participate on a voluntary basis.

I had not initially anticipated any problem in recruiting participants, as I had two key contacts who were willing (at the time of initial contact) to participate. One of these people had identified four others who stated that they were also willing to participate in the study, however when it came time to schedule interviews, they were no longer willing to discuss their experiences. Only one person carried through with the interview (I will be using data obtained from this interview).

Many other different approaches were taken to attempt to recruit First Nations people for the study, but all potential participants backed out at the last moment or never contacted me at all. An advertisement was placed in a well-circulated First Nations newspaper with not one response forthcoming.

I asked professional contacts to mention the study to suitable persons. One person who was approached agreed to be interviewed and then telephoned to say that she could not keep the appointment. I offered to do the interview by phone, or suggested that she could write out her responses and send them to me. She stated that she had changed her mind because she was not going to get anything tangible out of the interview. She told me that she would write a book about her experiences and have it published, thereby gaining monetary reward for her story.

An Elder at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre was approached by a First Nations contact. She said that she was willing to be interviewed but never contacted me to set up an interview time.

I mailed out interview questionnaires to two people who had expressed much interest in being involved in the study. I have never received a response of any kind from either person.

Many of those approached to take part in the study seemed reluctant to discuss their experiences for a variety of reasons, including fear, feeling they would not be believed, reluctance to discuss this issue with a white person, not wanting to remember their experiences at residential school, or believing they were not getting anything out of the interview for themselves. Ing (1991) also found potential participants reluctant to discuss their residential school experiences.

In July of 1995, a First Nations person who had conducted seventeen interviews for a similar study designed by myself for Willow Counselling Services, called me for an unrelated purpose. This study had been carried out in anticipation of my thesis research (somewhat of a pilot study) to see just what data might be forthcoming. It was after speaking with this person that I considered using that data for my thesis.

She had been able to recruit seventeen people to participate in the study and data collected from the interviews was quite candid as participants trusted the interviewer, most having known her for many years.

I secured written consents from ten of the original participants allowing me to use data from those interviews in my thesis research. I also used the data from the interview that I conducted myself.

So instead of the original plan for eight participants, I have obtained interview data from eleven participants. Seven participants attended Blue Quills Residential School near St. Paul, Alberta, three attended Edmonton Indian Residential School (Poundmaker's) and one participant attended Grouard Residential School.

The interview process.

Individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were done at mutually convenient times and at a mutually convenient location for both participants and interviewer.

Questions such as the following were explored with respondents to find out what First Nations people remember about their residential school experiences: What was the residential school experience like? What did it feel like to be there? What messages about self and others were received at residential school? What were relationships with family like while attending residential school? What experiences have these people had since leaving residential school? Interview guides are included in Appendix A.

The initial ten interviews were conducted by a First Nations person who tape-recorded and transcribed these interviews. The eleventh interview was conducted by myself. This interview was videotaped so that I could concentrate on the interview, rather than on taking verbatim notes. I transcribed the eleventh interview.

Duration of interviews was flexible to account for individual differences. However, the average time taken to complete each interview was two hours.

Immediately after the interview that I carried out was concluded, I spent approximately half an hour reflecting on the content and process of the interview, identified recurring or outstanding themes, and noted my reactions, thoughts, feelings, reflections about the interview, for future reference and analysis. Interviews were transcribed from tape or video recordings onto a word processing program.

Analysis and interpretation of data.

All tape recordings were transcribed onto a word processing program and analysis was done manually examining each interview line by line. Recurrent themes became apparent fairly soon although data analysis was still balanced with trying to obtain an overall picture of what participants' experiences have been. Categories were developed from recurrent themes occurring across the interview transcripts.

As previously mentioned, my focus was on capturing memories of the experiences of residential schooling so that I could gain a fairly holistic view of the personal meanings of participants' experiences and the possible personal impact of those experiences.

Ethical issues.

Informed written consents (see Appendix B) were obtained from each participant and all participants received a copy of their own written consent form. The content of the consent form were read and explained to each participant prior to them signing the form.

Confidentiality of participants' identities has been, and will be, maintained. Only the other interviewer and I know the actual identities of participants. An alias has been substituted for participants' given names in the narratives and in any reference to these narratives in the findings and discussion sections of the thesis. The names of the residential schools that participants attended have not been changed although I do not believe that this would enable identification of any participant.

Renaming participants with an alias presented a different ethical issue that I had not considered at the outset of the study. It occurred to me that this was not the first time that First Nations people had been renamed by someone from another culture. In this study, substituting a fictional name was used to protect the identity of participants. However, it seemed to take something away from the power of voice of participants. This is not an issue that can be resolved in this study, but perhaps other researchers can address the issue in the future. In hindsight, if participants had been asked, and had consented to, use of their own names, I believe that the presentation of participants narratives about their residential school experiences would have been more empowering for them because they would have had the opportunity to be heard as real people, not as 'less-than-real' people.

Apart from the above concern, respect for participants' personal and cultural differences was maintained by being aware of those differences and by remaining accepting and non-judgmental during any contact with participants. Interestingly, the ethical concern about negative emotional reactions brought about by talking about past memories of residential schooling never became an issue with any participant. It may be that these particular participants have dealt with some of the emotional reactions to their experiences and those that felt they were 'not ready' to talk about their experiences may have been the ones that may have required supportive resources post-interview.

Audio and video recordings and transcripts have been, and will be, treated as private and confidential so as not to identify to any other person the true identities of participants. I have the only copies of these materials and will maintain their safekeeping until they are no longer required. I will then personally destroy these items.

Limitations of the Study

This study contains the data collected from eleven participants and as such is not in any way meant to represent the experiences of all or even many First Nations peoples who attended residential schools. It is, however, a presentation of what these eleven people remember about their experiences at residential school and that is important in itself, as stated above. These data are validated, however, by what other First Nations persons who also attended residential schools have written or said about their memories of residential schooling.

As well, in terms of memory, it must be kept in mind that experiences of residential schools related by participants come from what they remember about those experiences in the present. Memories of events from the distant past are filtered through all of a person's experiences up to the present time, and therefore may not be remembered in the same way as recent events.

However, Singer & Salovey (1993) in their book The Remembered Self, state the following points about emotion and memory in a person's production of a definition of self:

1. Autobiographical memories may reveal repetitive affective patterns and themes that stamp an individual's most important concerns and unresolved issues. These memories [are] called self-defining memories. (p. 4)

2. Self-defining memories invariably have the capacity to invoke strong emotion. Memories that share this emotion are linked together by it, so that any one of the

linked memories could be cued by internal or external activation of this shared emotion. (p. 30)

3. A self-defining memory has the ability to appear in consciousness with the vividness of an actual experience. (p. 30)

4. Self-defining memories are almost always with you; they occupy your thoughts.... The negative ones ... begin to insinuate themselves into your daily life and brush aside any attempt to move them on their way. (p. 34)

5. The unrevived negative self-defining memory has the capacity to plague the mind, like an undercover terrorist, inflicting untraceable pain. The memory brought to light, however saddening or likely to torment, may at least be confronted and questioned. The intensity of feeling evoked by an unresolved conflict, as articulated by a negative self-defining memory, cannot be underestimated. (p. 41)

Memories of residential school may be classified as self-defining memories, and as such, can provide valuable information about the relationship between residential school experiences and current definitions of self held by First Nations people today. As stated in number four and five (4 & 5) above, self-defining memories can exert long-term emotional pain and personal dis-ease which can only be resolved by bringing the memory into conscious awareness and confronting and questioning the events surrounding that memory. Otherwise, certain similar trigger events can evoke the strong emotions related to negative self-defining memories and result in disastrous consequences.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

Research Findings

First, brief profiles of each First Nations person who participated in this study are presented from eldest to youngest. Then, the three major themes that emerged from the interviews: having no choice, emotional trauma, and surviving will be presented, amplified and illuminated by the voices and personal words of the participants in this study.

Participant Profiles

1. Matthew is a sixty-seven (Year of birth: 1928) year old male whose home on the reserve was decorated with many Native American ornaments and pictures. He enjoys making large pictures or photos and homemade picture frames in which to display them. He attended Blue Quills Residential School from 1937 to 1944 completing grade eight.
2. Sara is a sixty-three (1932) year old female who attended Blue Quills Residential School from 1941 to 1948. She finished grade eight at the age of sixteen. She currently lives on a reserve.
3. Ruth is a sixty-one (1934) year old female. She has a large extended family living with her in her home on the reserve, including two daughters, one granddaughter and a great-grandchild. Several family members are recovered alcoholics.

She attended Blue Quills school from 1943 to 1948 and left at age fourteen after completing grade five.

4. Peggy is a divorced fifty-eight (1937) year old female who raised a family of five children on her own. Four children are grown and are out on their own, leaving one child still at home in a large urban centre.

She lived on the reserve before she went to residential school and she knew only Cree before going to residential school. She attended sweats, Sundances and pow-wows with her grandparents. Her mother died when she was a little girl. She attended Blue Quills residential school from 1944 to 1952 and left when she was fifteen after reaching grade eight.

5. John is a fifty-five (1940) old male who attended Edmonton Indian Residential School in St. Albert from 1949 to 1954 and completed grade five. He entered residential school with Cree as his only language and knew no English. He now lives in a large urban centre.

6. Mark is a fifty-four (1941) year old male who is curator of a cultural museum in his community. He is a widower with several children, as well as a recovered alcoholic. He is a talented artist and painter.

He attended Blue Quills residential school from 1947 to 1956 completing grade eight. He then attended one year of high school in St. Paul while living in Blue Quills.

7. Carol is a fifty-four (1941) year old female who attended Blue Quills residential school from 1950 to 1953. After that, she attended day school on the reserve to complete grade five.

She lives with her spouse and step-son who spend much of their time farming their land on the reserve, which leaves her alone much of the time. She is a recovered alcoholic and had been abstinent for four years at the time of the interview.

8. Jackie is a fifty-three (1942) year old female who attended Edmonton Indian Residential school in St. Albert from about 1950 to 1959 completing grade eight. She, also, knew no English at first. After that, she attended grade nine in a small village near her reserve. She now lives in a large urban centre.

9. Gerald is a fifty-one (1944) year male who attended Poundmaker's Residential School in St. Albert from 1952 to 1958 completing grade seven, and then attended one year at Blue Quills. He left Poundmaker's because his mother passed away in 1958; he was twelve years old. He currently lives on a reserve.

10. Marjorie is a fifty-one (1944) year old female who attended Blue Quills residential 1955 to 1958. She then attended a school in a small village close to her reserve to complete grade five. She is married and has two children. They live in a house in a large urban centre.

11. Susan is a forty-six (1949) year old female who attended Grouard Residential School from 1951 to 1961 completing grade. The school was closed in 1961 and she then attended school in Edmonton to complete grade.

She lives with her spouse and grandson in a rural setting (not on a reserve) close to a large urban center. She is a recovered alcoholic and drug addict, and is now actively pursuing knowledge and experiences in traditional First Nations culture and spirituality.

Narratives created from each of the participants' interviews are presented in their entirety in Appendix C. These are stories written by the researcher that relate participants' memories of events of their residential school experiences. It is recommended that the reader read the whole narratives as they are made up almost entirely of participants' own words and give a more complete and moving representation of participants' experiences than can be presented in this section. I have added to the narratives only those words and punctuation necessary to allow the interview contents to flow smoothly. It is interesting that several of the participants regarded their American Indian names as nicknames rather than their actual names.

Emergent Themes

Three major themes emerged from the interview material: having no choice, emotional pain related to having no choice, and surviving the residential school system. The themes of emotional pain and survival skills are the emotional and behavioral reactions of participants to the residential school environment in which they had little or no choice. Each participant reacted to this situation in his or her individual way, each coming from their own unique perspective of their environment.

The name of the participant appears in parentheses immediately after each quotation taken from his or her narrative (see Appendix C).

Having no choice.

The concept of *no choice* is defined, herein, as a belief about a situation in which individuals have, or perceive themselves to have, no right or possibility to choose their own actions due to external factors that control, or are perceived to control, the behavior of those individuals.

There were many situations in which both participants and their parents felt that they had no choice or control over external forces exerted upon them. First Nations parents had no choice but to send their children to residential schools to avoid the political-legal sanctions of the government. As stated before, the Indian Act of 1876 gave the federal government paternalistic power over First Nations people and their activities. Parents had to send their children to residential school or the Indian Agents forcibly removed children from their homes and delivered them to residential schools. Parents that resisted and tried to keep their children at home, were denied food rations, fined or put in jail. Many did resist, however.

> But once they started giving Family Allowances out, children had no choice but to start at a certain age and attend till they were at least sixteen. (Ruth)

> Now I know that the residential school system gave us no chance to drop out of school and we had no choice but to attend residential school. (Gerald)

> Someone from the government, probably federal government, came with my mother to Grandpa's house and took me to Blue Quills. My mother delivered me to the school late because I refused to go and my Grandpa was

> mad because he left it up to me to attend or not. Dad was in disagreement upon the persistence of my mother and the Indian Affairs person who were there to deliver me to Blue Quills. (Marjorie)

> During our stay, we had to accept it as it was. (Peggy)

> At that time, it was not an easy thing to do but to attend residential school...but something had to be done. (Mark)

Most participants expressed that they had no choice but to accept the residential school experience and felt helpless to change their situation in life.. This was partly due to federal political pressure and partly due to the institutional nature of the school setting.

The phrase *institutional* is used in this study to describe the nature of the residential school. An institution can be understood as a social grouping that exists, for the most part at least, within a building or set of buildings and maintains its own set of rules and regulations. Activities tend to be standardized for all who live in the institution. There are generally two distinct groups of people in an institution: those who control the institution and those who live in the institution and are governed by the former group.

The term *institutionalization* is used to refer to the effects that people experience from living for long periods of time in an institutional setting. The effects specific to childhood institutionalization are reported in the research described near the end of this section. First however, participants reveal the institutional nature of these schools through their memories of residential school life.

On initial arrival at a residential school, each child was deloused, had their hair cut short, was bathed, and assigned a number.

> We all had numbers. There was so many of us we were crowded. We were always in a crowded place...
> Most of the boys were clipped...they had flat tops or brush cuts like the boys in the service. The ones that had nits, they got shaved... (Matthew)
>
> All I could smell was the disinfectant, and they used coal oil to kill the lice, and they would cut the hair short... The first time I seen a nun in my life, she seemed like an alien, and some of them were tough. (Peggy)
>
> It is quite an experience when you have to start off without knowing English. I only knew Cree when I first left home. (Jackie)
>
> Upon arrival, they put us in round tubs and scrubbed us and denitted us, but my head was clean. I had long hair up to my tailbone and they chopped it off to above my ears. I cried and screamed, and they just grabbed me with both hands, just like a dog; I was so mad. I would not talk decent to anyone after that... My number was number ninety-eight. (Marjorie)
>
> Then they took my coat away from me and they took my clothes away from me and they gave them to some other kid. (Susan)

All same sex children wore the same clothes and hair style. Everyone followed the same daily routine, including prayers, mealtimes, schooling, chores, and bedtime, day after day, for months on end. There were no allowances for individual differences.

> We had denim overalls...we had to wear them. (Matthew)
>
> The type of dress was not important to me because all of our clothes were the old style. Being clean was what was important. Hair was cut short and shaved above the neckline. (Sara)
>
> The nun would clap her hands to wake us up at 6 a.m. Many of the children were tired. We got used to getting up. (Ruth)
>
> We were up at 6 a.m. ...sometimes at 5 a.m. if we decided to go to mass and it was not compulsory to attend mass.

Classes were from 9 till 4 p.m. Before supper, we would go to the rec room, then we would go to the lavatory to get cleaned up for supper. After supper, we went outside but we had to get permission first.

We wore our hair short like a page boy cut. We wore canvas dresses, petticoats with pockets. (Peggy)

Our daily routine was get up, make bed, clean up for breakfast, breakfast, class till late afternoon. Then we were free to use the playground or roam the wooded area. (John)

At residential school, we got up at 6 a.m., got washed, then down to breakfast in a single file. We had to go to church every morning, confession every Friday, classes from 9 to 4 p.m. We had light chores to do, but the bigger girls did the heavier chores. We did some sweeping, washing steps or stairs, helping in mending, and helped in the laundry room. We wore uniforms. (Carol)

We would rise at about 6:45 a.m.. We would make our own bed. We had chores to do before classes but I cannot remember what they were. Classes from 9 a.m. till 3:30 p.m. We had chores to do after class. Supper was at 6 p.m.

Church every morning in the chapel. It was a one hour service and I cannot remember if it was before or after breakfast.

Our dresses were all made the same but they were not uniforms...same shoes and socks. Our hair was cut short. (Jackie)

We wore blue cover-alls and our hair was short. (Gerald)

We had to wear uniforms and we had to be very neat.... We had to do whatever everyone was doing, (Marjorie)

You got up in the morning, then you prayed. Thank God or whatever for giving us this wonderful life! What a joke. Sometimes we went to church, sometimes we didn't. Then we'd go wash our faces on the lavable, in our little basin, brush our teeth, make up our bed, get our clothes on and go downstairs, line up two by two, to the dining room and sit at our respective tables with a nun at the head. All of us at our separate tables and they'd give us a bowl full of lumpy porridge with milk. We'd have breakfast and leave there two by two and line up for school. Then we'd go for lunch. And we prayed lots then too because we had to pray before and after meals. Then we'd come back from school and we'd sit around that big main area and pray. We had to say the rosary beads. Afterwards, we'd go back to the refectory and have supper. Then they'd let us play...after supper...then we prayed again. We prayed a lot. When we got to go outside, we walked around four sidewalks.

> It was like four sidewalks and we'd walk around those because we were restricted to the four sidewalks. I remember that real well. (Susan)

They had no choice but to be hungry. They were not given enough to eat and had to eat the same food most of the time.

> For breakfast, we had buns and porridge which had a burnt taste.
> We did no garden work. It was done by a man whom we called Brother. He was Polish and he was very nice to us and he would give us vegetables. His English was very poor. He also did the baking and he would give us buns but we had to steal the butter...usually a pound so we could butter our buns. (Ruth)

> The food was gross...burnt porridge, liver and burnt potatoes. (Peggy)

> I disliked the meals most, especially the soup which always had parsley in it, (Mark)

> ...hunger. We hunted rabbits in the bush for extra meals. (John)

> I hated porridge. We also had to eat biscuits which were a healthy food containing vitamins and I disliked them... they used to make me sick. (Jackie)

> Meals were often boiled kidneys and potatoes more than once a day: dinner and supper...and bread and butter. (Gerald)

Cod liver oil seemed to be one of the necessary supplements given to participants at residential schools.

> I disliked cod liver oil. We had to take it every morning. They did not use a spoon, they would just pour it down our throats. Some would vomit in the bathroom. (Ruth)

> I disliked cod liver oil the most. They poured it out of a jug into our mouths. (Peggy)

> ...and we had to have castor oil once a week. (Mark)

> We had to take cod liver oil pills...we did not take it in liquid form. (Carol)

Children had no choice regarding cultural orientation at residential schools. They were forced to learn Euro-Canadian language, culture and religion, and to reject Native American culture.

> Then we were not allowed to speak Cree in our own playground, but if the Master was around we would get punished for that. If no one was around otherwise we would not get punished. (Matthew)
>
> The only language known was Cree before we attended the residential school...I did not know one word of English. (Peggy)
>
> I started residential school with all Cree as my language and no English. (Mark)

Students who attended in the early 1900's, sometimes had parents and grandparents that could not speak English, so they either had to speak their Native American tongue or not communicate with their family members when they did see them.

> We had to refrain to Cree when we returned home because our mother did not speak or understand English. Our father understood and spoke both though. (Sara)

Some participants stated that they had no choice but to be exposed to a different spirituality reality than they were used to practicing. Some stated that they could choose to attend services, which may have reflected that school policy changed over time. Many participants are still devout practitioners of one non-Native religion or another.

> We went to mass before breakfast. (Ruth)
>
> In Catechism, we had to kneel on a cement floor. I used to get sore knees from kneeling, especially during Lent (we prayed more). (Peggy)

> Church was early morning which was compulsory to attend and included fifteen minutes of kneeling and saying the rosary. I should have become a priest. (Gerald)

> We had to get up early every morning and attend church. We had no choice. Religion was Roman Catholic and in Latin, with some sermons and songs in Cree, too. (Marjorie)

They had no choice but to be separated by gender. They did not have the opportunity to learn about normal male-female relationships as they grew older. They were not taught about normal sexual development or sexuality as these topics were regarded as sinful.

> I think I was brainwashed. The nuns talked so much about sinning, they did not teach us about the birds and the bees. I thought I would get pregnant if I kissed a boy. (Peggy)

> The boys were not allowed to talk to the girls. (John)

> I was separated from my sisters. We could not wave at each other. (Mark)

> I was close to my sister and my brother was in too but I did not see him as often for he was in a different area. (Carol)

> The girls would sit on one side and the boys on the other side. We were segregated. They did not teach us about the birds and the bees or personal hygiene. I had to go to my girlfriend to get knowledge about the period. They did not tell us ahead of time about changes or sex. I guess they did but the age limit was sixteen to see films on sex education. (Jackie)

> It was so funny when I did my first Communion. I thought I was getting married because I was paired with a male boy and I screamed. The girls had to wear white gowns with veils and the boys wore little suits. He was so shy, too. He had no choice but to stand with me. I guess it reminded me of a wedding that I had attended...
>
> I was so glad when it came to mealtime because many of our relatives were in the dining room. I used to look forward to meals or get-togethers... then I would also see my brother. (Marjorie)

> I had one sister and five brothers there. You weren't allowed to see them except in the refectory. They sat on one side and we sat on the other side. We

> just saw them there, we didn't get to talk to them...and out on the playground...we seen them out there. In the wintertime, sometimes they'd let you skate with them. We couldn't do anything about it. We grew apart. Once in awhile we got to play with the boys but not real often. We knew what boys were but I think we had to sneak to talk to them. I don't remember...I was pretty little and I didn't have much interest. (Susan)

Some participants were told that male-female relationships were sinful and to be avoided at all costs. At the same time, some children witnessed nuns and priests embracing and kissing, when they thought they were not being observed.

> I also remember in Grade one, the nun that was teaching us would flirt with the priest. They would make us put our heads down on our desks and they would tell us to sleep while they went around the corner to smooch. I guess they liked each one another. Many seen them do these things. (Ruth)

Participants had no choice but to be exposed to institutional child-rearing as a model of parental behaviors. They had little opportunity to observe and learn traditional parental behaviors in their own homes and communities.

> The nuns were very strict, the priests did not interfere. The nuns did very little work, they delegated the work to us older ones. (Ruth)

> The principal, matrons and supervisors were strict...they taught us how to clean and scrub floors. They domesticated us. They were so strict...we were scared that there would be some misgoing ons which were forbidden. (Jackie)

> Our chores consisted of washing floors and no one got away with it. Sometimes the nuns would scrub the floors with us so the other nuns would not be mean to us. Some were nice and some were very mean. (Marjorie)

Participants experienced very little in the way of affection and warmth from residential school staff.

> I disliked working with the Sister on the first floor. I don't remember if she ever smiled. She never wore a happy face...she always looked like she was mad. (Ruth)

> They didn't talk to us much either: just to ask you what you did, if you were bad or something, before they spanked you. I got pretty cold living there. (Susan)

Participants had no choice but to follow the prescribed behavioral regime that ensured the smooth and efficient operation of these institutions. Non-compliance was not tolerated and physical punishment was a common outcome for opposition to institutionally expected behavior.

Children in residential schools had no choice but to be subjected to physical abuse in the form of strapping. By being forced to watch other children being strapped, First Nations children also suffered emotional abuse. Traditionally, in Native American culture, physical force was not used as a disciplinary technique. Again, this form of discipline opposed traditional cultural values.

> At one time, I seen the Master, Mr. D, use a horse whip, I think he used it on the boys but he would do it in the washroom without having the rest of us see it. We used to hear them scream and cry. Other time if we lost something we got whipped like for losing a sock or a mitt. (Matthew)
>
> Once, a big nun pushed me down the stairs... They used a thick strap and we had to lay on the table with only the underpants on. (Ruth)
>
> About one hundred girls asked to stand around the rec room to watch when one got strapped by a nun while four girls held her down. (Peggy)
>
> For discipline, the strap was used... (John)
>
> I never seen any girls get strapped, but they would get sent to bed early. The boys did get straps though. (Carol)
>
> For discipline, the principal did the strapping. (Jackie)
>
> They gave us lickin's with straps. (Marjorie)
>
> Mostly we had the nuns as teachers. I thought they were real mean at the time I lived there. It seemed like it was all part of...well...it was supposed to be.

> I thought everybody grew up like that. They would beat you with a razor strap....
> They made you march two by two. They were scary people...we were terrified of them. The things I saw them do to other people...
>
> They took my sister upstairs when she lost her fork. And she wouldn't tell on anyone else...because, well, she's not a stool pigeon. She was a little kid...she tried to run. She made it to the door and they caught her, took her upstairs. They let us go outside. From outside of the place, I could hear her screaming...and there was nothing I could do to help her. When I saw her later, they had put her to bed. She was bruised from here (points to upper back) down to here (points to calf), and she was swollen. I've never seen anybody beaten like that in my life...even now. Over a fork! Cause somebody hid it on her. They did stuff like that, the nuns...made us tough. (Susan)

Any child that attempted to escape from the residential school was hunted down and forced to return to the school where they were severely physically punished and their hair was usually shaved off as a warning to any other child who was thinking of running away.

> ...also if they took off, they got shaved. (Matthew)
>
> They shaved one's head if they ran away. (Peggy)
>
> ...their heads were shaved as a means of punishment for running away. (John)
>
> Straps were only for running away or swearing. (Jackie)
>
> If you ran away, they would cut your hair...shaved it to here. (Susan)

Residential school staff inflicted public punishment and humiliation on these children for seemingly trivial matters, that is, behaviors not commonly thought of as punishable offenses. This included emotional abuses such as name-calling, insults and other indignities.

> I remember I had bad blemishes on my face and the Sister who was in charge, somewhat as a nurse, used to put black stuff on my face that looked like axle grease. I used to hate going into the dining room area to eat in front of

> everyone. I would cry and the tears would go over the grease. I was very embarrassed. It is something I will never forget and it made me not want to stay in the residential school.
> I also remember they treated one girl very mean. They would pour milk on the table and make her lap it up. The nuns would go around the corner and giggle from there...they made fun of her. (Ruth)

> One time me and G. were just finishing up when one of us tripped on a cream can full of cream and we both got strapped: five whacks on each hand. The principal did the strapping with a strap that was four inches wide and one inch thick. (Gerald)

> They put you down there...they put you down. A lot of verbal abuse...called us every scuzzy name they could think of and had us believing them. (Susan)

Although none of the participants of this study stated that they had been sexually abused, one participant mentioned that other children had spoken of having been sexually abused by nuns or priests.

> We were told that people were killed there. I don't know this for a fact. I was told about sexual abuse there. I talked to one of the guys from there...my brothers or D., the guys had said though some of the guys were being sexually abused. What happened to the girls, I don't remember. Good thing, eh?
> They used to line us up and say, "Show 'em your undies." Why? (Susan)

This concludes the presentation of external events over which participants experienced having little or no choice or control during their time at residential schools.

Emotional pain.

Emotional pain is defined, for the purposes of this study, as an internal condition of an individual resulting from an external assault (either physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual, or any combination of these) on the body, emotions, intellect, or spirit of an individual, and which has a lasting psychological or emotional effect on that individual. Following, examples are presented of emotional pain that participants reported experiencing in reaction to the above residential school experiences of having no choice.

Almost every participant mentioned experiencing feelings of extreme loneliness while at residential school. This appears to be one of participants most potent memories of their residential school experiences. They felt very much alone and experienced emotional starvation as residential school staff were generally distant and emotionally unavailable. School policy prevented anything more than brief parental visits. As mentioned before, residential schools were usually far away from First Nations communities and Indian Agents discouraged people from leaving the reserve to visit their children in residential school.

There were few visits by family due to long distances between First Nations communities and residential schools, and difficulty traveling as the means of travel were usually quite slow (horse drawn wagons, for example). This resulted in long periods away from parents, families and communities, and a great deal of loneliness for participants.

> Our parents came to see us once a month because they used wagons by summer, sleds by winter. I seen my brothers and sister all the time. By the time I was taken into residential school, my sisters had all gone home....
> The ones who took off a lot were let go. I took off sometimes, too. It was not that bad in residential school but it was loneliness that took the best of us at times or the reason why we took off. The loneliness was greatest in the fall, probably because most of us were very close to our parents. (Matthew)

> I was very lonesome. (Sara)

> My brother really hated returning to residential school...he had to be carried out and he used to cry and scream. Once I started, I would be fine, especially after the first month. I used to get very lonesome during the first month that I would sit by the window. (Ruth)

> We seen our siblings only on weekends. (Peggy)

> The separations from family were unbearable. Visitations were far and few. The worst aspect of residential school was the isolation from parents and home. Loneliness almost killed me... There was no one to care for you. (John)

> We seen our parents only during the holidays. (Mark)

> I got lonesome a lot, especially on weekends. (Carol)

> My parents came only once...it was hard for them to travel. We went home at Christmas or Easter if our parents had the money to pay for the trip. We used to visit our parents in a parlor...the school had two parlors or visiting areas.
> I used to get very lonesome upon our return to residential school in the fall but eventually we would get used to it. (Jackie)

> In St. Albert, we did not see anyone at all... We were one hundred miles away from home...
> A negative aspect of residential school was not being able to see our parents. (Gerald)

> We had cold harsh winters and that was the loneliest of all. (Marjorie)

Some participants report feelings of fear just prior to arriving at residential school.

> I was scared stiff before attending. (Peggy)

> I was scared before I started. (Mark)

Some participants reported that they still have very strong thoughts and feelings about their experiences in residential school that included fear and anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, hatred, and inability to trust.

> After, I was glad or relieved to get out. It was like getting out of jail. I think I was brainwashed. (Peggy)
>
> It's funny when you're young and if someone treats you mean you remember. (Marjorie)
>
> I thought, before, that I had been put here for one reason, that God put me here for one reason...to see how much one human being could suffer before they died, and I really believed that! I really, really believed that. But not anymore. I don't believe in that God...the one that Grouard had...that was going to zap me with lightning bolts and I was going to hell just cause I was Indian. All those awful things and I don't believe that...I don't buy into that! That's bullshit!
>
> But I still have a lot of fears, built right inside of me. Lots of anger...lots and lots of anger. All kinds, and hey, they don't just go away overnight. I was telling my friend that if I was to let all of this anger out at one time, I would kill somebody without a second thought, and I would be an extremely dangerous person to myself, as well as to other people. But behind this anger is a lot of pain...why else would there be anger? I don't know how to put aside all those Grouard things. That didn't happen to me just one day...it happened to me over five or six fuckin' years! A long time, yah...so there's a lot in there that needs to come out...but I can't do it all in one day. I'm sorry, I can't. It is too much. It's gotten less...way less, but it's still there though.
>
> But I would be a liar if I said it wasn't true. I learned how to hate God, and how to hate white people, and I learned how not to trust. Those are good skills! And those are the skills I passed on to my kid. (Susan)

We have now looked at what participants of this study have said about the situations that they experienced in their day to day lives in residential schools, as well as the emotions that participants remembered in connection with these residential school experiences.

Survival skills.

Next we will look at what resources and skills participants used to get through the residential school system, as well as some of the methods they have since used to survive in the world after leaving the residential school system.

Survival skills are defined in this study as the abilities an individual attains and possesses, to continue to live or exist in spite of an experience or condition, to do so without accepting defeat, and to perform these skills well as the result of long practical experience.

Many participants reported that recreational activities provided some relief from the rigid daily routine they endured in residential schools. Some of their happiest memories of residential school were of going on picnics, playing games, taking part in sports activities, viewing movies, and having canteen time.

> Hockey took a lot of their minds off schooling and the boys as we got older we had very good teams. (Matthew)

> I used to like it when Christmas came along. They would bring the boys over to our area: that was the only time I seen my brothers. They gave us treats like popcorn balls and some candies. I liked Christmas get-togethers, seeing my brothers, and the movies. (Ruth)

> There was times it wasn't bad. Some fun times especially when it came to movies which was twice a month. Ballgames in the summertime, skating in the wintertime. (Mark)

> I liked the picnics at Three Mile Lake. We had to walk at least three miles with two nuns and take turns carrying our baskets of food. We used to look forward to them. We would fry our food once we got to the lake. I remember my cousin, who died in 1972, used to enjoy them a great deal too. (Carol)

> We received fifteen cents on Saturdays so we could run to the store for candy. (Gerald)

> We used to see movies like Ben-Hur and Charlie Chaplin and some Holy movies. We used to do drama and do plays like Ole Black Joe. One person would be dressed in black and he would play dead. A couple would play father and mother and have their children around them, and the others would surround the group and sing Ole Black Joe because he had just died. It was a sad play. It was similar to a concert. I used to look forward to drama and Christmas concerts. We all had to sing.. (Marjorie)

> They took us to the lake every summer. It was nice. That was our high point. They turned us loose in the bushes. That was real freedom. We could go pick berries and do everything we needed to do, until they'd ring this damn bell to call us back in.
>
> At Christmastime, we got to go to midnight mass. I assumed that it was midnight, I don't know, I guess. We had to go to bed real early that night. They'd wake us up. That was kind of nice, cause they came in and they would sing Christmas carols and they had candles, I think. That was kinda nice...nice to get wakened up that way. Instead of the usual way...which was the bell.
>
> Canteen was one of the positive things about residential school...and there weren't many! The priest would come with his little purple whiskey bag. Must have been a drunk! Yah, it was a little purple whiskey bag. They still have them...I think it's Seagram's or something...with yellow writing on it. It had money in it. He'd come once a week and give us our quarter, or whatever, our dime. Different ages...the older you are, the more money you get and then you'd get to buy candy at the canteen. They had it locked up in a little cupboard. (Susan)

Other happy memories of residential school were of family visits and of returning home.

> There was a lot of excitement when it came time to return home. A truck used to deliver us home (a large farm truck, probably a one ton). Once I remember I got so excited that I slipped two different shoes on. I was so shy, I hid my feet all the way home. (Ruth)

> The happiest moments during residential school was when grandma and grandpa arrived to pick us up for a visit or to return us home. (Peggy)

> Our parents visited us at least once a month and we came home for Easter and Christmas holidays. (Carol)

Keeping in touch with First Nations culture appeared to be a positive influence for some participants during their residential schooling.

> I feel I did not lose my culture because I did attend the sweat lodge when I returned home to visit during the summer holidays. (Sara)
>
> We attended sweats, Sundances and pow-wows with our grandparents. (Peggy)
>
> We attended Sundances every summer. We traveled by team to other reserves like Onion Lake and Frog Lake, and we did a lot of camping. We also went to pilgrimages and other Native cultural activities like feasts, etc. and he also had his own sweatlodge in our back yard in which we participated, or we had to be doorman if we did not go in. (Marjorie)

Above, positive situations that helped participants survive their time at residential school have been presented. Following, are some of the behaviors that participants adopted to help them survive the negative aspects of their residential school experiences.

First Nations children in residential school learned to be silent unless they were verbalizing that which was acceptable to residential school personnel. They were not allowed to question or complain about anything. Such outbursts would be met with physical punishment. Secrecy was maintained about abuses endured by children in residential school, because they feared what would happen to them if they told anyone.

> He [father] never really mentioned his residential school days as to how he was treated. (Matthew)
>
> A little man came to the school in a Volkswagen. We were told that he was going to talk to us. We were standing around in a group, a bunch of us girls, and saying "We can't tell, we can't tell what happened. We can't tell and we can't talk." Because we were scared of the nuns and we were told not to tell cause something bad might happen to us. There must have been an interview but I don't remember it. The school closed down shortly after this little guy came in the car. (Susan)

Some First Nations children in residential schools felt that they had to protect each other from the school staff.

> I supervised some girls and some happened to be my nieces...either my brother's or my sister's daughters which was a plus for me and it also gave me a chance to know them better. I supervised during and after classes.
>
> When I used to supervise the children, I would let them steal food and I would allow them to play or roam freely so I could have fun too. (Sara)

> My closest friends were the late M., and B....she was my protector. (Jackie)

> My sisters ... they covered for me.... my sisters would bring their books down and teach me how to read and also help me with my arithmetic. (Marjorie)

> They took my sister upstairs when she lost her fork. And she wouldn't tell on anyone else...because, well, she's not a stool pigeon....
>
> We had to protect each other from the nuns, though. We were really afraid of them. Maybe we were afraid of each other but we were more afraid of the nuns. They could do more damage. (Susan)

In order to survive, some children had no choice but to distance themselves from their emotions and other people. They were forced to control their feelings; they were discouraged from expressing their emotions.

> I became a loner, something I would have done anyway I guess. I also became a survivor...there was no one to care for you. (John)

> The sisters told me not to cry because I would get the other kids lonesome too. (Marjorie)

> I can only remember having one friend, P, but that was only for a little while. I just stayed by myself....
>
> I learned how to hate God, and how to hate white people, and I learned how not to trust. Those are good skills! And those are the skills I passed on to my kid. (Susan)

Participants gave accounts of situations in which they or other children behaved in ways that hurt others.

> The nuns called me "muskwa" because I was so powerful and I was mean to everybody. I would grab their hair and bite, and steal their stuff, like make-up. I used to get my sisters into trouble because they covered for me. One time I put lipstick all over my mouth. The sister asked me "Where did you get it from?" I pointed at my sister and got her into trouble. She got so mad at me for getting her into trouble. (Marjorie)
>
> We were real sneaky. We were real good at this. There was fighting amongst the kids in there...shit, I used to get beat up all the time. I got a black eye once for arguing with this little girl across the table from me. Ya'a, she was mean...that chick hit hard...she gave me a black eye. Nobody protected me... It was a cold place.... We had to be tough, to survive... (Susan)

Developing a positive relationship with at least one caring adult seemed to help some children cope with the emotional hunger they experienced in residential schools. Some children behaved or began to think in ways that helped them obtain some sort of positive interactions with residential school staff and others.

> I think the kids that were treated bad were bad and the ones who were good were treated good. (Matthew)
>
> I remember one Sister very well because we became good friends. I was never harshly disciplined because I was a pet to the nuns. I was treated good but some were treated rough. I worked hard and that was probably one of the reasons I was treated good. (Sara)
>
> Some kids had it good through favoritism. (Ruth)
>
> I had a very good teacher and that was Sister P....
> Sister P. gave me strong encouragement. (Mark)
>
> No discipline was used on me...I didn't misbehave. (John)

Some children were unable to distinguish between the positive and negative motivations of seemingly caring adults.

> I remember one girl telling me in the dorm that when she went, the guy that adopted he...that man told her that he loved her and she was really thrilled and so was I for her...that he told her he loved her and that he sexually assaulted

> her. This was the way that he showed her that he loved her and if she did these things that would mean that he really loved her and she really loved him. She told me that she felt special, privileged. She felt like somebody really loved her. She bought into the bullshit. How can you not? That was the only form of love we ever got. The nuns were told not to get personally involved, and they never did! (Susan)

Running away from residential school appeared to be an overt attempt to escape the aversive environment within. Some were successful but others died of exposure trying to travel long distances home in winter. Most were tracked down and returned to school where they endured more of the negative treatment from which they had tried to escape.

These survival methods, adopted by First Nations children in residential schools, may have helped them make it through their time there. However, after leaving residential school and becoming adults, these ways of surviving were not always appropriate. Some participants reported that survival skills used in their adult lives have included numbing their emotional pain through chemical means.

> There were some who did not survive it. Especially many of us had been alcoholics after residential school and we survived because we were strong. Many did not survive alcoholism, they died. (Matthew)

> She learned to cope with booze. I learned with booze and drugs. How else do you cope with situations like that? (Susan)

Others chose to live similar or familiar lifestyles, which raising their children as they had been raised.

> I learned to delegate my household duties to my children because the nuns delegated their work to us. (Sara)

> I didn't know how to be a mom...I didn't know how to be a wife...I didn't know fuck all about other people. I grew up really angry, really bitter and twisted. There's a lot of things I just plumb don't know about...a lot of things you guys take for granted. I don't know because I was never taught. What I was taught was how to be violent. I was taught that I was the worst scum of the earth on this planet. I was taught how to pray. Big deal...for all the good

> it did me...and I was taught how to be inferior. Those are the things I was taught.
>
> [My husband] thinks that the maternal instinct comes naturally...I say Bullshit. It does not! Some of us are farther removed from that than other people. I do not have any skills at all when it comes to parenting. I do not have a clue. I don't know! I learn as I go and even then I'm wondering. That affects my daughter in a really negative way. I taught her how to grow up and be not trusting, be mean, how to be afraid, how to be punched out on a regular basis. I taught her all those things...all those negative things. (Susan)

Some involved themselves in violent, abusive relationships.

> There was a lot of abuse. I got beaten...I got beaten a lot. I got called names. 'Fuckin' squaw' was a big one. One guy named me 'critter, ' told me I chased cars and bit tires and shit like that. I was not impressed. It really hurt and I came out believing that I was the ugliest and the dumbest and everything else like that...human being that walked the planet...and it just fit back in with Grouard stuff.
>
> I just accepted the violence in my relationships...that was part of life. I didn't have a clue about relationships. I thought relationships, man/woman relationships at first were...well, we get together and now we go visit someone. That's it...that's all I knew...that's what I thought it was about. I didn't know what to do. So I got taught real quick that if you're in a relationship that means you got beat on. (Susan)

Some chose to view their residential school experiences in a positive light despite reporting that they also felt emotional pain about these experiences. The residential school system must be credited with providing participants with a rudimentary education and training in practical homemaking and farming skills, despite it being an unpleasant environment in which to learn these things.

> We should be thankful they taught us homemaking skills and they educated us. (Peggy)

> I have a good feeling about my experience in residential school. I learned a lot, I received a good education and most of my years were good. They were very strict. We were treated good and bad. Recollections seem like jail...their regulations were strict. I seen it with my own eyes. (John)

> I enjoyed my experience in residential school. Nothing was bad. I got lonesome a lot, especially on weekends. I disliked my first year there. I did not care much for the nuns. Two were mean but they never hurt me. (Carol)

> I see no effects of residential school in being away from my family... I used to get very lonesome upon our return to residential school in the fall but eventually we would get used to it. (Jackie)

> Now if we still had residential schools, we would have less dropouts and that would be a plus for the children. Sure I think it was bad to have no choice but the good part is we learned a lot out of it and we were disciplined. I did not mind the experience. A negative aspect of residential school was not being able to see our parents. Other than that, everything was all right. It was all positive. I wish residential schools were still in effect. Our young people would not be able to drop out of school. They would have no choice. (Gerald)

Some chose to learn more appropriate survival skills after realizing that skills they had previously used were not working. Some participants mentioned that learning how to relate to other people more effectively, especially those of the opposite sex, those in authority, and children, has helped them become healthier and happier in terms of interpersonal relationships.

> Recovery helped change him [spouse], and me. It took lots of time. It took both of us talking about how we were feeling. We used to have little mini-meetings just between him and I. We'd tell each other how we're feeling today...what does this program mean to us...where we're at today. We did it because we were interested...we just did it...it just came....
>
> She's [daughter] talking to me grown-up now. She fought everything we said before...now she's agreeing with things we say. She's still going to have to deal with a lot of stuff...that's good, but she's started to heal. My daughter's growing up. She's becoming whole...we all are. It's so good. I never would have thought. My dream for her was to follow in my path that way...might as well follow in my path this way. (Susan)

Some participants did not seem to realize that the underlying motivation for the government in providing them with an education was to destroy Native American culture to assimilate First Nations people into Euro-Canadian Canadian society.

> The residential school had no Cree instructors. Now many schools include the Cree language in their curriculum, and they should have included in the curriculum during those years we spent in residential schools. They seemed to not recognize the Indian language or culture, for example, they taught us that Sundances were Satan's work. They taught the white culture. They tried to steer us away from our culture more or less. They should have had some Elders to teach the culture to pass on wisdom and the Indian way. (John)
>
> They did not teach the Indian culture like spiritualism, language, etc. and I feel they really should have. (Jackie)
>
> They should have taught Cree. No Native culture was included at all. We could not speak Cree in school and caught, we would get punished. (Gerald)

An important survival skill used in adulthood by some participants, however, was accepting and learning about their First Nations culture. Learning about First Nations culture meant accepting themselves as First Nations people, not as outsiders to their own culture.

> I strive for the Indian way now. I feel that it helps me a lot but it is a very slow process. I've been tested many times which has made me strong in my faith. Maybe if I was weak I would have turned back to alcohol and I would have crumbled. While we are trying to be strong, we can easily be discouraged in many ways. Elders say 'Never put yourself down if one asks you for help.' I used to think I was unworthy but now I help whoever I can. (John)
>
> But then I was feeling some more despair and my sister...out of the blue...I just love that girl some days... She drags over this Native guy and we started talking to him. It turns out he was going to sweats and shit like that. That was really neat. He said he would take us to some if we wanted to go. He explained a lot about the Native culture to me cause I didn't know and he knew I didn't know. That was obvious! I picked his brain and picked his brain and picked his brain until he told me everything he could tell me, and he took us to sweats. Then I found a place where I was home...then, I found where I was supposed to be.
>
> It felt good...really good. I finally found somebody that I could relate to, somebody that had the same feelings that I had, that had been through the same experiences that I had, thought like me, that talked like me...just another part of me.
>
> I met him about two years ago, maybe two and a half. He was told by an Elder that he'd be going someplace beyond the sweat, and it was our place he was supposed to go to. He really helped me...he's since died. It broke my

> heart. But he left me with a real nice thing. Since then...I don't know...my spirituality has really got better...starting to understand a lot more things and I see all of the shit before as...not all of it...I see some of the stuff that happened before as just shit and abuse, and I see that I don't have to live like that anymore.
>
> Now I have found peace...I have something real, and for the first time in my life, I have found a safe place. I never had a safe place until just a little bit ago. (Susan)

Some participants stated that they are very slowly learning to trust and to feel safe again by talking about, and sharing with others, their residential school experiences. For these people becoming aware of emotions suppressed for many years can be frightening because of the intensity of those emotions. Some felt that they needed other people to hear, believe, and thereby validate their residential school experiences.

> Things just started to change after I started going to those [NA] meetings, for some reason. I hated them. I hated what people did...I hated the games they were playing...I just hated them. But after awhile, I got kinda used to them... comfortable being there. I never felt like I belonged there and this was home...that I had found THE ANSWER or anything like that. It never did any of those things for me but it was something and I've stayed straight. (Susan)

> For other people...I need them to...I'm emotional...to know that what I experienced was real...what we all experienced was real and I just need them to know what really happened.
>
> I would really like people to understand where people like me are coming from...that we have a lot of anger but it's not directed at anyone personally. Even though it's brought out that way at times, it's not personal. It's really hard for us to deal with that shit...it's really hard for us to talk about that stuff...really hard for me to talk about that stuff.
>
> I would like them to just know that there was a hell that existed in Grouard, and that we didn't deserve it.
>
> Not all the apologies on the planet ain't going to make it no different...there ain't no sum of money that'll change it. In fact, that's insulting.
>
> I just want for people to understand, just for people to know that this happened, and just to believe it for the first time. To believe that what we say is real...that it really happened. (Susan)

Participants have described several situations in the residential schools that they attended that indicate the institutional nature of residential schools, and behaviors at the hands of school personnel that we would now consider child maltreatment. Following, a summary of research findings related to childhood institutionalization and maltreatment is presented that will illuminate the effects of these phenomena on children and their personal and interpersonal development.

The effects of childhood institutionalization related to disrupted early parenting, such as early admission to long-term institutional care, endangered secure parent-child bonding, deprived the child of continuity of parental care and affection, and increased the risk of psychiatric problems substantially. "There is an extensive body of evidence showing that bereavement or loss of a love relationship constitutes a potent stressor throughout life (after early infancy) and that the presence of a close, confiding relationship is protective against stress in adults of all ages, as well as in children." (Rutter & Rutter, 1993, p. 121) Effects of an institutional upbringing in childhood include unfulfilled needs for love and belonging, indiscriminate seeking out of attention and approval, lack of social inhibition, feeling little or no control over life, inability to plan or make decisions about future actions, apathy or aggressiveness, poor peer relationships, and difficulty forming close, confiding relationships (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations [FSIN], 1985; Quinton & Rutter, 1988; Rutter, Quinton & Hill, 1990; Rutter & Rutter, 1993).

According to the findings of this study and of other First Nations accounts of residential schooling (Bruderer & Jaine, 1993; Bull, 1991; FSIN, 1985; Guss, 1993;

Ing, 1991; Manuel, 1993; Persson, 1986), the effects of prolonged separation from families of origin appear to include loneliness and feeling alone in the world, problems in interpersonal relationship, confusion about identity, little exposure to appropriate parenting and interpersonal role models, lack of knowledge of normal child development and behavior.

As with childhood institutionalization, maltreatment in childhood has been found to produce varying degrees of negative effects on the behaviors of children, many of which appear to continue on into adulthood creating interpersonal difficulties of various types.

Child maltreatment is an overall term that encompasses all the major types of child abuse or neglect. Following are the definitions used by the Alberta Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (1991):

> Physical abuse is the intentional use of force on any part of a child's body that results in serious injury.
>
> Emotional abuse is anything that causes serious mental or emotional harm to a child, including verbal attacks, exposure to violence or severe conflict in the home, causing a child to live in fear much of the time, and forced isolation or physical restraint.
>
> Sexual abuse is the improper exposure of a child to sexual contact, activity or behavior including any sexual touching, intercourse or exploitation by anyone in whose care the child has been left or who takes advantage of a child.
>
> Neglect is any lack of care which causes serious harm to a child's development or endangers the child in any way, including failure to meet the child's physical or emotional needs.

The effects of childhood maltreatment include low self-esteem, decreased social competence, withdrawal, social isolation, fear, anxiety, depression, aggression towards others, insensitivity to the pain of others and inappropriate responses of anger or aggression to the pain of others are typical characteristics of the maltreated child with variations in reaction to maltreatment related to individual differences (Crittenden, 1985; Finkelhor, Gelles, Hotaling, & Straus, 1983; Gelles & Conte, 1990; Main & Goldwyn, 1984).

The effects of each type of child maltreatment appear to be expressed mainly by emotional reactions of anger, fear, anxiety, and lack of trust in others. These emotions triggered behavioral reactions of aggression or withdrawal that were expressed in various ways. Cognitive reactions to maltreatment included children thinking they were incompetent, worthless, bad, etc. As well, maltreated children had little or no knowledge and skills about appropriate interpersonal relationships .

Maltreated children are more likely to exhibit these characteristics as adolescents and adults than those who are not abused or neglected as children. These factors are likely to result in poor school performance, poor peer relations, including marital, parent-child, and social relationships, and in problems finding and maintaining employment (Berlin, 1987; Canadian Psychiatric Association, 1987).

Child abuse can become an intergenerational cycle in some, but not all, adults abused as children. Parents who had not had their own needs met in childhood were more likely to be unable or unwilling to meet the needs of their own children (sometimes expecting children to take care of them or siblings), were less likely to have adequate knowledge in regards to child's developmental needs, normal child behavior, appropriate, nurturing parenting behavior, and were more likely to have inappropriate expectations of their children (Canadian Psychiatric Association, 1987; Gelles & Conte, 1990; Finkelhor, Gelles, Hotaling, & Straus, 1983; Ing, 1991; Main & Goldwyn, 1984; Quinton & Rutter, 1988). This phenomenon is by no means hereditary but rather, learned from parental behaviors modeled within the family unit.

It is important to remember that these effects are not inevitable. As mentioned previously, children who were able to form a positive relationship with a trustworthy adult were better able to withstand institutionalization and maltreatment during childhood. As adolescents or adults, being able to express the emotions they had in relation to negative childhood experiences, and learning to understand the underlying dynamics of child maltreatment also helped them defuse the power of those experiences (Attneave, 1977; Crittenden, 1985; Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1988; Quinton & Rutter, 1988).

To summarize the findings of the study, participants' descriptions of residential school experiences included a combination of institutional rules and activities (Essen, 1974), and maltreating behaviors inflicted by those who ran the residential schools that resulted in participants feeling that they had no choice over many aspects of their lives. It is evident from the information embodied in participants' responses and from literature containing other accounts of residential schooling that the phenomena of childhood institutionalization and maltreatment were common features of residential schools.

Participants experienced having little or no choice over these situations within the residential school system that resulted in emotional pain and the development of certain survival skills in reaction to their residential school experiences. The most outstanding emotional memory of participants' residential school experiences was the feeling of intense loneliness that resulted from being separated from their families and communities for such long periods of time.

Participants mentioned several behaviors that were used to survive the residential school system. These behaviors were both positive and negative, and participants often resorted to these survival skills during their adult lives as well. First Nations children in residential schools did what they could to survive by preserving what little bits of self-esteem and identity that they were able to salvage. Reactions, such as running away from residential schools, were a means of surviving and escaping an oppressive situation even though this may have resulted in death from exposure or being severely beaten when caught. Some students were successful in reaching and staying home, and that, I believe, gave hope to others.

Speaking one's language while at residential school seems to me to have been a necessary means of staying grounded in reality and of having some meaningful contact with others. Perhaps to an outsider looking in these actions can be perceived as a means of fighting back or resisting the environment, but what did it mean to those who were doing these things on an intrapersonal level? Participants' narratives indicate that they reacted to the residential school environment in ways that helped them survive on a personal level rather than as a show of socio-cultural resistance to a dominating, oppressive environment as is the current direction of thought in Native Studies (Miller, 1992).

Miller (1992) gives several examples of First Nations people resisting government or church actions and policies in reaction to hardships to which either they or their children were subjected. However, he gives the reader the impression that First Nations people were in control of the fur trade, reserve life, and residential schooling. One must wonder then at how widespread social problems developed in Native communities. Perhaps such problems were, and are, also a demonstration of resistance to being assimilated into Canadian society and of being in control of Native-Canadian relations, although at the expense of the mental health of many First Nations individuals and of the stability of many First Nations families.

None of the eleven participants in this study mentioned conscious resistance to the residential school personnel or the overriding ideology. Several did mention that their reactions (in the form of thoughts, feelings and behavior) resulted from the fear and loneliness that they experienced in these residential schools.

The findings of this study indicate that what these participants remembered about their residential school experiences is very similar to what other First Nations people have said about their experiences in the residential school system as presented in Related Literature and Research.

Data collected in the first study are very similar in many aspects to the data that I have collected from my own interview, although the original ten interviews are generally not as lengthy and the interviewer did not have a mental health background. I believe that this resulted in less emotional content being brought forth by most of the participants interviewed by this person as she did not possess the skills necessary to evoke and deal with emotional material. However, the data that was produced from these first ten still brought forth very similar themes.

Themes emerging from all interview data is similar to information I have collected in a residential school seminar facilitated by Bull, Bull, & Jebeaux (1994), in a cross-cultural workshop presented by Inglangasuk (1992), and in accounts of personal residential school experiences told by First Nations people (Acoose,1993; Bruderer & Jaine, 1993; Guss, 1993; James, 1993; Johnston, 1988; Meili, 1991; Sellars, 1993; Wassaykeesic, 1993).

Discussion

Discussion of the findings of this study is organized around the interpretive framework of the symbolic interactionist perspective. One of the assumptions of the symbolic interactionist perspective is that people ought to be studied on their own level. This theoretical perspective places priority on the interpretive, defining aspects of the human mind. In a study of this nature, this assumption applies to both participants and researcher. Participants told interviewers about their memories of residential school experiences as they interpreted and defined those memories in the present. I, the researcher, understood what participants said about their experiences based on interpretations and definitions arising from my own life experiences up to that time. In discussing the findings of this study, I do so through the filter of my experiences. Others who read this study will perceive it through their own unique experiential filter.

The symbolic interactionist perspective views societies as complex sets of symbols that are passed on to new members of that society by older members. The values and beliefs of the society are embedded in the symbols of that society and members use these symbols to decide how to interact with others. Human nature is determined by whatever the individual experiences, through interactions with others and the environment, from birth onward. All experiences are integrated into an ongoing and ever-changing definition of self through an introspective, reflective process. Each member of a society acts as well as reacts to what they encounter.

Societal conflicts and incongruities resulting from change, subcultural differences, and scarcity of resources can create strain within and between societies.

Symbolic interactionist perspective describes a circular progression to the existence and nature of societies that is congruent with the First Nations belief in the circular, interconnected nature of all things (Four Worlds Development Project, 1988). Children are born into a culture and they learn the unique meanings, values and beliefs about symbols that define that culture or society. They then become that society, a dynamic social context into which new members are born, thus recreating the circle of the life of that society. Both First Nations people and European immigrants belonged to distinctly different cultures or societies each with its unique set of beliefs about the meanings and values of cultural symbols.

Cultural symbols are important because societal members decided how to act and react based on beliefs about the importance of the meanings and values of these distinct symbols learned from interactions with parents, relatives and community members. First Nations people, then, learned to act and react to experiences based on beliefs about the cultural meanings and values that they learned from other First Nations people with whom they interacted. They were not genetically predisposed to act in certain ways and they were not just passive recipients of external stimuli. The same can be said about Euro-Canadian people.

The behavior of First Nations children and adults is a product of their life histories, of all experiences, social and individual, direct and vicarious, through interaction with others. Newly acquired meanings and values are integrated with existing ones in a process of continuing modification. Reflexive introspection gradually creates a definition of self through a process of being aware of and defining oneself that is ongoing, ever changing and dynamic. Again, the same is true for Euro-Canadian people.

The residential school system represented the attempt of the dominant Canadian society, with its unique set of cultural beliefs, meanings and values, to force the children of First Nations society with their different set of cultural beliefs, meanings and values, to give up their own cultural symbols and adopt the cultural symbols of Euro-Canadian society. Because of the differences between the two cultures (especially technological and power differences), incongruencies, conflict and lack of resources led to strain both within, and between, the two societies.

In reaction to the above situation, an analogy to a demolition derby comes to mind: Two teams with very different rules of conduct are pitted against each other. The Blue team believes that its members must exact whatever force is necessary to demolish the vehicles of the Green team. The Green team believes that its members must respect the Blue team members because they have more technologically advanced vehicles. The Green team also believes that the safety and well-being of members of both teams are more important than winning.

Of course, the result of the competition is that the Blue team demolishes the vehicles and some of the members of the Green team, and the Green team is totally confused about the behavior of the Blue team. Later, some Green members take out their anger on the Blue team or their own spouses or children. Some are left so confused and wounded by the experience that they withdraw to drown their sorrows with a few brew. Some continue to believe in the old ways and are able to see the wide ranging destructiveness of the ways of the Blue team. Others, much to the dismay of their own team, actually join the Blue team. The Blue team is the winning team after all.

The residential school system left many First Nations participants feeling that they had no choice but to accept the experience, and feeling emotional pain in reaction to their experiences, especially loneliness resulting from separation from their families and culture. However, participants found ways to survive residential school experiences.

The survival skills or actions that participants developed over time came about in reaction to interactions with residential school personnel. These survival skills were based on the beliefs, meanings and values that they had learned from both First Nations culture and Euro-Canadian culture. The longer participants were in the residential school system, the more likely these survival skills were derived from the dominant culture as it was expressed within that system. As exposure to traditional First Nations culture decreased, more and more First Nations beliefs, values and meanings were either lost or distorted through the experiential filters participants developed through interactions with residential school staff from Canadian culture.

Participants' behaviors and definitions of self are products of their life histories and all experiences including individual and social, direct and vicarious interactions with other people. For First Nations people who attended residential school, these experiences included interactions with residential school staff who behaved in ways that both contributed to the efficient operation of the institution and reflected the effects of their own cultural upbringing. Residential school staff exhibited behaviors that were also a product of their life histories and all experiences including individual and social, direct and vicarious interactions with other people. The dynamics of the religious subcultures to which these people belonged also influenced their behaviors towards their First Nations wards. Sipe (1995) discusses the historical development of power and sexuality issues in the subculture of the Catholic clergy. These issues are currently creating a crisis in the Catholic church because many people have come forward to tell of their experiences of physical, emotional and sexual abuse at the hands of some members of the Catholic clergy. A Canadian example of these abuses has been identified in the reports of individuals who were institutionalized in the Mount Cashel orphanage that was a Catholic facility.

Participants of this study have also made reference to the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of First Nations children, as well as sexual behavior between Catholic nuns and priests in residential schools. These experiences were part of the many interactions from which participants and other First Nations people learned about cultural values and meanings that developed into beliefs about relationships with others and definition of self (Urion, 1991).

After residential schooling ended, participants had to deal with the confusion created from being exposed for prolonged periods of time to a conflicting set of cultural meanings, values and beliefs when they returned home to their families and communities. Returning home could have been a healing experience for participants if they had come home to an intact First Nations society. However, because their parents and grandparents had probably been forced to go to residential school and had also experienced similar interactions with Euro-Canadian school staff, the confusion was probably compounded (FSIN, 1985).

In First Nations society at any one time, there were people who had learned anything from very little about traditional cultural beliefs, meanings and values to very much about traditional culture dependent upon the amount and type of teachings of their own family members, how much or how little they had accepted of the residential school teachings about Euro-Canadian culture and religion, how much or how little they rejected their own culture, and how they had come to define themselves through all these experiences.

Therefore, when a First Nations person came home from residential school, the community consisted of people with varying degrees of cultural and personal intactness. Because of the existence of incongruent beliefs, values and meanings in First Nations communities, conflict between the members of that culture was a probable result. In addition, conflict existed between First Nations people and Euro-Canadians.

First Nations society experienced strain when they encountered incongruencies and conflict in their interactions with Euro-Canadian society. Societies inevitably have incongruency as change occurs, subcultural differences exist, and valued resources are scarce. The findings of this study suggest the existence of several incongruencies that participants experienced in both the residential school system and the socio-political context of that time. Incongruous situations and ideas related to political, cultural, religious, and personal matters were found interwoven amongst the data derived from participants' interviews.

Incongruency is defined as that which is incompatible with, not in harmony with, unequal to, inconsistent with, or not in agreement with the context or surroundings. Confusion is a likely strain resulting from constant exposure to incongruencies within one's environment (FSIN, 1985; Hodgson, 1992; Ing, 1991; Pepper & Henry, 1991).

One of the major incongruencies participants encountered in residential schools was in terms of the great differences between First Nations culture and Euro-Canadian culture (as expressed by the church missionaries who ran the schools). For example, incongruency existed between Native American cultural value of respect for all living things and the humiliating, degrading, hurtful treatment First Nations children experienced in residential schools at the hands of church missionaries. This behavior resulted in degradation of cultural values and spirituality in the eyes of First Nations children, and reflected a total lack of respect for First Nations people and their culture.

Another set of incongruencies occurred in what participants were taught about religion and the behaviors of those who taught these children about religion. They were taught that intimate physical relationships were sinful and that they would be punished by God for such sins. Meanwhile, participants were aware that some children were being used by some of their teachers in sexually abusive relationships.

These teachers were also seen engaging in intimate relationships amongst themselves by some participants.

These situations may have sparked some confusion between right and wrong, and good and bad, in the minds of these participants. They also likely experienced some confusion between the residential schools' Euro-Canadian portrayal of God and the traditional Native American Creator in terms of sin and punishment, and appropriate personal and social behavior as prescribed by First Nations cultural spirituality.

As a result of being denied contact with their own First Nations culture, participants had little exposure to interaction with family and community from which they would have learned about First Nations cultural values, meanings and beliefs. They were, however, exposed for prolonged periods of time to an institutional lifestyle and emotionally distant and often abusive surrogate caretakers. When they were able to interact with family and community, cultural differences again created incongruous situations.

Participants stayed at residential schools, generally, for ten months of the year, over a period of several years. Therefore, there was little opportunity to learn about First Nations cultural beliefs, meanings and values from family and community. They spent a majority of their developing years in rigid, militaristic institutional settings with a very different set of cultural values and beliefs.

These participants were not able to watch and learn how their own parents parented. Therefore, they lacked appropriate child-rearing role models that they would normally have had in their own communities. They did not have the benefit of continuity of parental and familial care and affection. Ing (1991) identified similar findings.

When First Nations children were able to interact with their families during summer holidays, problems arose for both parents and children. Some parents and grandparents would not speak English to their children as they did not wish to interfere with the teachings of the residential school personnel. They knew that their children would be punished if they returned to residential school speaking their First Nations language.

Since social ostracism and ignoring were used by Native American people to discipline their children when they had done wrong, it is possible to see how their children, on returning home for the summer from residential school, might feel as though they were being disciplined for doing something bad: trying to talk to members of their family, or, returning home from residential school. This perception of self as bad may have become a self-fulfilling prophecy (that is, if a person believes that he or she is bad, he or she tends to behave in ways that support that belief, and then incorporates that belief into a definition of self) for some participants. In any case, children may not have understood what they had done wrong which may have resulted in feeling rejected by their families, and ultimately, by their culture.

Traditionally, not acknowledging or speaking to Elders was a sign of disrespect. The longer children were at residential school, the more likely it was that they would have become unable to speak their language, due to lack of usage, fear, shame, or all three. This blocked the orderly transmission of information about cultural values, beliefs and traditions from old to young, especially when children were also ashamed of their parents, their language, and their behaviors. In other words, many Indian children became ashamed of their culture and ultimately of their own identity as Indian.

The First Nations traditional belief that parents must be good to their children or the children would be taken away by the Creator may have had an impact on First Nations parents whose children were taken away by persons perceived as agents of the Great Spirit. One cannot help wondering if First Nations parents felt that they had somehow hurt, or been undeserving parents to, their children which had caused the Creator to take them away to residential school. This belief may have been reinforced by Indian Agents who pointed out to First Nations parents that they were not able to provide their children with adequate food or clothing, and that their children would be better cared for in residential schools. It is a possibility that these First Nations parents experienced guilt and shame about their perceived inability to care for their children at home as well as to protect them from mistreatment at residential school. These incongruous situations likely distanced and alienated First Nations family members from each other (Couture, 1972). Sadness and grief over the loss of formerly close family relationships may have been a result of this alienation.

Perhaps one of the more important findings of the study was the difficulty that some participants experienced in developing close relationships with spouses and children (as adults). There was confusion about how to behave in close personal relationships related to the cultural incongruencies they had experienced in relationships with residential school staff. They prevented participants from exploring normal male-female relationships within the residential school system and within their families and communities.

Participants experienced many socio-cultural losses (Ross, 1992) in their lives related to separation from their families and community. Cultural meanings, values and beliefs, language, parental affection, and knowledge about family life and relationships were lost when these children were separated from their families for most of their formative years. To complicate matters, in many cases First Nations parents and grandparents had also attended residential schools and had also been exposed to a different set of parental and interpersonal behaviors in those schools.

Participants have described many negative and some positive experiences that occurred during the time they spent in residential schools. These experiences, as part of life history, contributed to shaping a unique definition of self for each participant (Urion, 1991). These self-definitions were based on limited interactions with family and community (First Nations culture), and a large number of interactions over a long time with residential school staff with Euro-Canadian cultural values and beliefs. The incongruencies inherent in participants residential school experiences resulted from the differences between First Nations and Euro-Canadian culture, and from incongruencies within Euro-Canadian culture as well.

The life experiences of these participants did not contribute to a coherent definition of self as a member of a distinct culture or society. Instead, they were exposed to two differing sets of cultural values and beliefs, and in some way they had to come to some definition of self that included both. It appears that definition of self had to incorporate in some manner the incongruencies inherent in the differences between the two cultures in order to survive.

Participants did not have a solid, secure foundation on which to develop an emotionally healthy definition of self as adults. They were made to feel inferior as American Indian people. To live or exist with an incongruous definition of self resulted in great confusion as to identity: to act like an American Indian was definitely to be avoided if a child was to survive in the residential school, but the child had brown skin and could never be white. This left many Native Americans feeling that they belonged to neither the Native American nor the Canadian society; they had no clear identity and belonged nowhere.

Basic developmental issues of trust, belonging, competence, and integrity were compromised in residential schools due to the lack of positive interactions with school staff in an institutional setting. Erikson (1980) describes the basic developmental tasks of building basic trust in others, becoming autonomous, becoming industrious and competent, and forming a well-defined identity as being vital to the development of the healthy personality. Some participants developed diffuse, incongruous self-identities that left them unable to trust, feeling that they belonged nowhere, that they were stupid and incompetent, and that they were worthless and inferior as human beings. Some suffered on, leading empty, lonely lives in which they kept their emotions numbed, very often by means of self-medication with alcohol or drugs. Others took out their anger on family members or on society in general. Some participants implied that there were also those First Nations people who died because they did not have the strength to make it through life after their residential school experiences.

Interestingly enough, despite the negative reports about residential schools presented above, several participants said that they had nothing bad to say about residential school. In fact, they reported good memories of residential school, but these people in the same interview reported memories of intense loneliness, lack of control, degradation, and unfairness existing in the schools.

Several of the participants stated that they felt the nuns and priests did what they thought was right. They felt that their overall intentions were good. These statements appear to highlight the incongruencies that participants have internalized from their residential school experiences. Perhaps these people have become so used to living with incongruencies that they are no longer aware of them. After all, good Christian thoughts are not to be sullied by bad heathen feelings.

It is also noteworthy that the ten participants interviewed by the First Nations interviewer expressed very little in the way of emotional reactions to their residential school experiences. The only emotional reaction that participants seemed to remember clearly was the feeling of being very lonely while at residential school. The absence of any strong emotion about these experiences except for loneliness stands out as an important aspect of the findings of this study. Hodgson (1992) has identified fear and loneliness as emotions that are commonly reported by First Nations people who abuse alcohol, although it is not clear whether these feelings occur before or during drinking. Perhaps not expressing emotions is a cultural variable that has not yet been explored in detail, although my experience in providing therapeutic counselling services to First Nations people, would suggest otherwise. In my experience, First Nations people generally express their inner feelings quite freely, and with great relief, when they feel safe enough to do so: that is, many do not trust others to respect their feelings and are afraid to expose their emotions as they may later be used against them in some way. Perhaps participants have learned that free expression of emotions is not to be tolerated, is not safe and that they must keep such expressions silent in order to protect themselves.

Perhaps, because of the context of the interview situation with a First Nations interviewer who had also attended residential school, participants felt that expression of emotions might upset the interviewer. Some participants did say that they had to protect each other from the residential school staff thereby having one small way to have a little control in an excessively controlling institutional setting. Perhaps, these participants felt that they had to protect the interviewer from their own emotional reactions to residential school experiences. Perhaps participants felt that the interviewer already understood their emotional reactions so they did not need to bring up these emotions.

On the other hand, the First Nations person that I interviewed expressed feelings of emotional hurt, fear and anger, and did not mention loneliness as an outstanding reaction to the residential school experience. Perhaps this was because I am White and therefore represented the dominant Canadian society to this person.

Perhaps this person was also further along in the personal healing process and felt that she had permission to express emotions freely. I can only speculate on these occurrences. This is an area that could be further explored in the future.

In summary, the symbolic interactionist perspective has provided a useful interpretive framework for understanding the meanings of participants' memories of residential school experiences. Traditional First Nations society differed greatly in its cultural beliefs, meanings and values, from those of Euro-Canadian culture. Euro-Canadian culture with its own unique beliefs, meanings and values, was forced on First Nations children in residential schools. Differences between cultural values and beliefs created conflict and incongruencies between the two societies that were intensified within the residential school system.

As a result, First Nations children were exposed to interactions with Euro-Canadian school staff that were full of incongruencies and conflicting meanings. These children created confused, incoherent definitions of self and First Nations society based on the often incongruous, conflicting meanings that arose from their interactions with Euro-Canadian residential school staff, and from limited interactions with their families and communities.

Participants' distorted perceptions of self, First Nations society, and Canadian society that arose from interactions experienced during residential schooling, continue to manifest incongruous beliefs, meanings and values about self and others. As a result, definition of self and interpersonal relationships continue to be confusing issues for many.

Some participants have taken positive steps to try to untangle the incongruous meanings, values and beliefs they have internalized to develop a more coherent sense of self and to improve their relationships with others.

Some participants appear to continue to accept incongruencies in their perceptions of residential school experiences. Perhaps they still feel that they have no choice.

Chapter 5: Summary, Implications and Recommendations

Summary

This study was done in response to my interest in the disarray I had witnessed in First Nations communities in which I provided professional, therapeutic counselling services. I wondered what had happened, and still is happening, to these people that might be related to what I had seen. As I read more about the traditional cultures of Native American people, I could see that there had been some major behavioral shifts over a long period of time.

A key point appeared to have been when First Nations people lost their autonomy and became wards of the federal government with the passing of the Indian Act of 1876. Within ten years, the federal government began to attempt to assimilate First Nations people into the dominant Euro-Canadian society. The means chosen towards this end was the residential school system funded on a per capita basis by the federal government and overseen by religious missionaries.

The residential school system seemed to be the most intrusive attempt by the federal government to control the lives, families and communities of First Nations people; to attempt to rid them of their seemingly backward Native American culture and to give to First Nations children the benefits of learning the Euro-Canadian culture. The transmission of First Nations culture was subject to much discontinuity through the interference of Euro-Canadian culture, specifically as directed at young children within residential schools. I thought, therefore that First Nations memories of their childhood residential school experiences might be a place to look for some insight into current First Nations problems.

Related literature and research were presented to provide background information to the study. Literature included a review of information about traditional Native American culture, specifically child-rearing practices. A brief review of socio-historical factors provided political and social background information relevant to the time period in which residential schools existed. This was followed by a review of the current situation of First Nations people in Canada. This information illuminated many of the personal and interpersonal problems that occur in First Nations families and communities today. As well, several accounts of residential schooling experienced by other First Nations people were examined to determine what had already been said about these experiences.

This thesis has been an exploration of the memories that eleven First Nations participants have provided of their residential school experiences during childhood. Personal interviews were conducted with each participant. Ten of the participants were interviewed by a First Nations individual and one participant I interviewed myself.

From transcribed interview material, narratives were created for each participant that described, in participants own words for the most part, what they had remembered about residential schooling. The eleven interview transcriptions were used to extract threads that appeared to reoccur quite often.

These threads were compared and analyzed, and three common themes emerged: a) having no choice, b) emotional pain, and c) survival skills. Following brief profiles describing each of the eleven participants, these three themes were presented and quotations from participant narratives were given to highlight aspects of each of the three themes.

The findings strongly suggested that residential schools, as supported by participants' memories, were institutional in nature and that some of those responsible for running the schools were physically, emotionally or sexually maltreating or neglecting (or any combination of the four) towards their young charges.

A brief synopsis of literature related to the effects of childhood institutionalization and maltreatment was then presented to determine if the memories that participants reported about their reactions to residential schooling were similar to those presented in the research on children who had experienced similar circumstances. This literature provided evidence that effects commonly associated with childhood institutionalization and maltreatment were similar to the findings of this study related by participants in the themes of emotional pain and survival skills. The theme of having no choice illuminated the existence of the institutional nature of residential schools and the maltreatment that participants experienced within those schools.

Participants' memories of their residential school experiences were also very similar to accounts of residential school experiences related by other First Nations people and to other research done in this area, as presented in the section on relevant literature and research. This validated the findings of this study as most other accounts are very similar in both content and feelings described as related to residential school experiences.

Discussion of the findings was organized around the symbolic interactionist perspective as a framework for understanding the themes that emerged from participants' accounts of their residential school experiences. A key point derived from this interpretive framework was that incongruencies inherent in the residential school system led First Nations people to develop incoherent, confused definitions of self and culture.

The implications and recommendations that emanated from the discussion of the findings of this study follow.

Implications and recommendations

Many Native American children appear to have weathered their time at residential schools seemingly without permanent damage despite intense loneliness for their families (Inglangasuk, 1992; Miller, 1989). Some faired better because they were favored by one or more of their caretakers (Inglangasuk, 1992; Johnston, 1988), and by those who were encouraged by parents and grandparents to continue to practice traditional ways of life when home from school. These schools may have even accomplished the opposite end to cultural destruction in some of their survivors; Miller (1987) states:

> The Indians, who had wanted the schools to master the basics of the white man's learning so as to enable themselves to cope with the white man's society and economy, did at great pain and cost acquire the necessary skills. The emergence of a new generation of Indian leaders, schooled in residential institutions and devoted to the preservation of their people as Indians, is one manifestation of this success. (p.11)

Scott-Brown (1987) mentions several Indian-rights leaders that were schooled at St. Dunstan's, the last industrial school opened near Calgary in 1896 and closed at the end of 1907. Dempsey (1979) stated that several Crees have become teachers, nurses, administrators and band employees. Without having had the opportunity to obtain an education, First Nations people may not have survived the Euro-Canadian takeover of traditional lands at all, never mind becoming political leaders, professionals and other educationally advanced workers that many now are.

Despite these seemingly positive First Nations reactions to the residential school system, I believe that even those who appear to be functioning well within Canadian society also exhibit emotional artifacts of their experiences in residential schools which are most likely to be expressed in their close interpersonal relationships. In my work as a mental health counsellor, I have met many capable, successful First Nations people whose interpersonal relationships, especially family relationships, are not healthy. Some still break down in tears when discussing their residential school experiences.

Although we cannot prove a causal link between the residential school experiences of these participants, the effects of childhood maltreatment and institutionalization, and current personal and interpersonal problems First Nations people experience today, it is still valid to look at the themes that emerged from participants memories of their residential school experiences and examine research that relates to these themes of having no choice, emotional pain, and survival skills, to identify commonalities between these phenomena.

I believe that I have shown that there are many similarities between the themes found both in this study as well as in accounts of residential school experiences written or spoken about by other First Nations people, and what the literature reveals about the effects of childhood institutionalization and maltreatment. These findings add a cross-cultural perspective to prior findings in the areas of childhood institutionalization and childhood maltreatment.

I have also discussed residential school experiences in terms of the incongruencies that these experiences presented to First Nations people. These incongruencies continue to exist in the lives of First Nations people today (Ing, 1991).

For example, the federal government is currently decreasing the amount of money First Nations people are being given and is transferring federal responsibility for such services as Child Welfare and policing to First Nations communities. At the same time however, the federal government is slow to allow First Nations people the right to govern themselves. The federal government has just recently released policy guidelines for implementation of aboriginal self-government (Canada, 1995). In effect, the government is withdrawing paternalistic support from First Nations people without withdrawing its paternalistic power over these people. Frideres (1988) suggests that "allowing" aboriginal self-government may be just a way for the federal government to abdicate financial responsibility for Indian people and this view is supported by historical documents (Miller, 1989; Tobias, 1976).

At the same time, some First Nations people are opposed to being granted the freedom to govern themselves because they fear losing their treaty rights, that is, the paternalistic support of the federal government (Adams, 1989; Indian Chiefs of Alberta, 1970). It appears that First Nations people feel that they will lose their identity if they lose their treaty rights. This is hardly surprising in light of the history of past government assimilationist legislation regarding Native people: the Indian Act took away the status of Indian women that married non-Native men, the Gradual Civilization Act was aimed at replacing Native culture and identity with Euro-Canadian culture and identity, the Enfranchisement Act took away Indian rights and identity in exchange for Canadian citizenship, and the residential school system was aimed at replacing Indian identity with a Euro-Canadian identity. It seems that

Canadian citizenship and self-government means, paradoxically, a loss of Indian identity, status and treaty rights to many First Nations people. It is unfortunate that cultural identity has become so enmeshed with government policies that to become free of federal government control also means to lose one's Indian identity. Certainly, this is not a necessary outcome, but First Nations people need to realize that cultural identity is not dependent on the Indian Act. Cultural identity would be strengthened without government interference and financial control, not weakened. With all freedom, however, comes greater responsibility in self-determination including economic development and stability.

As stated above, the federal government has begun to withdraw economic support already. This will leave First Nations people under the political power of the federal government but without the means to support themselves. This forces First Nations people to take the initiative to either live like other Canadians in mainstream society (with a perceived loss of Indian identity), or face the alternative of living in poverty on reserves in continued segregation from mainstream society (maintaining Indian identity). Once again, First Nations people are faced with paradoxical choices that are incompatible with a positive outcome.

During my professional involvement with First Nations individuals, I have often heard people from a family or community angrily say to other community members who were attempting to further their education, advance in their career, abstain from alcohol or drugs, or just participate in psychosocial counselling: "What makes you think that you're better than us?" This is clearly an incongruent situation that leaves the receiver of such a message feeling like a traitor to either the sender of the message if they continue with their personal pursuits, or to themselves for not continuing to work towards their personal goals. These people cannot be who they want to be, but neither can they be who others want them to be.

Erikson (1980, p.143) conjectured that the "adolescent if faced with continuing [identity] diffusion, would rather *be nobody or somebody bad, and this totally, or indeed, dead -- by free choice -- than be not-quite-somebody*." His words may ring true when one considers the interpersonal conflict, violence, substance abuse and high suicide rate prevalent in Native American communities today.

First Nations people need to become aware of such incongruencies, talk about them, and come to terms with them in such a way that the confusion is cleared up in relation to these incongruencies. The means to such an end is not totally clear but such things as engaging in, and learning about, traditional cultural practices such as healing circles and sweatlodges are some positive steps that have already been taken by First Nations people. It would appear that a solid First Nations cultural identity can indeed be separated from the control of the paternalistic authority figure of the federal government. Becoming self-governing means coming of age, not losing one's identity. When a young person becomes autonomous from a parent, he or she gains power and attains a unique separate identity that is removed from the parental identity. The young person does not lose his or her identity, rather establishes it more firmly. With independence of course comes more responsibility for his or her own well-being and parental support is much reduced if present at all. Because paternalistic parental support is enmeshed with treaty rights for First Nations people, withdrawal of support is seen as both a betrayal of past promises made and as abandonment to the dependent children of the Crown. This will likely prove to be a very difficult situation to resolve.

However, I believe it will be necessary to address these basic intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural conflicts in order to confront and resolve those basic developmental and relationship issues that deter First Nations people from becoming whole again. Although these issues may have been initiated by socio-historical factors that produced the residential school system, several generations of First Nations people have passed on problematic personal and interpersonal behaviors to their children, and their children have passed these on to their children, whether or not they ever attended residential school.

These issues seem to have more to do with political and cultural differences, the effects of childhood institutionalization and maltreatment, and the resulting incongruencies in the lives of First Nations people, than with the residential school system per se. Residential schools appear to have been the vehicles for these phenomena, not the cause.

It is not just increased cultural awareness that will *fix* First Nations problems. First Nations people also need to gain an awareness of the impact that residential school experiences have had on their personal and interpersonal lives. Their children and grandchildren need to become aware of how residential school experiences influenced their ancestors' behavior, especially in terms of interpersonal relationships.

It will then be necessary to become aware of, and come to terms with, the emotions related to the institutionalization and maltreatment they were exposed to in the residential school system. Children and grandchildren will need to become aware of, and come to terms with, their own emotions as related to problematic behaviors experienced in interpersonal relationships with their parents and grandparents.

As mentioned by Singer and Salovey (1993) regarding self-defining memories:

> The unrevived negative self-defining memory has the capacity to plague the mind, like an undercover terrorist, inflicting untraceable pain. The memory brought to light, however saddening or likely to torment, may at least be confronted and questioned. The intensity of feeling evoked by an unresolved conflict, as articulated by a negative self-defining memory, cannot be underestimated. (p. 41)

It is not enough to say, "It is in the past. Let it go." The pain and confusion is not just in the past but also very much in the present. It needs to be faced, confronted and dealt with so that personal and interpersonal peace can be experienced by First Nations people. Those who have taken this path can attest to its power.

As well, both Canadian society and First Nations people need to become aware of, and acknowledge, the direct and indirect effects that these aspects of the residential school system have had on First Nations people and their interpersonal relationships, including relationships with Canadian society. This shared awareness and acknowledgment are necessary to promote personal healing, to promote healing in interpersonal relationships within families and within Canadian society, and to prevent similar situations from reoccurring in the present or future.

Suggestions for further research

Replication of this study would be useful to provide further validation for this and other similar studies. There are also many other aspects of residential school experiences, such as life experiences after residential school, issues related to interpersonal relationship in families and communities, and healing, in which further research can be done.

It would be useful to study experiences of people of other cultures, including non-Native Canadians, who were institutionalized as children to determine if there are similarities or differences between accounts of these experiences and residential school experiences of First Nations people.

More information is required in terms of the many incongruencies presented in the discussion. An interesting approach would be to explore the socio-historical backdrop of the residential school system concerning the political, cultural and social structures that produced and maintained these incongruencies. Also, research on the incongruous relationship between perceived identity and government policies.

The study of loneliness in relation to the lives of First Nations people today could bring out further insights into the impact of the residential school system. Loneliness appears to be a factor that emerged not only from this study but also many times during my professional interactions with First Nations people.

Another area that requires more in-depth study is the relationship between the ongoing interpersonal difficulties experienced by First Nations people that may have been initiated within the residential school system and the effects identified in research on childhood institutionalization and maltreatment. That is, it would be useful to examine to what extent First Nations people still exhibit effects related to childhood institutionalization and maltreatment in their interpersonal relationships, and how, or have, these effects been passed on to children and grandchildren who have never attended residential schools.

It would also be interesting to study the therapeutic or healing effects of cultural activities and ceremonies as compared to mainstream therapeutic approaches to healing emotional trauma for First Nations people. A study that might provide more personal insights into the therapeutic effects would endeavor to examine these effects from the perceptions of the recipients of each of these two healing approaches.

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Appendices

A. Interview Guide
  a. Initial
  b. Revised

B. Written Consent Form
  a. Initial
  b. Revised

C. Participant Narratives

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview guide one.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL STUDY*:

This interview guide is intended only to provide a rough outline of aspects of residential school experience that may be useful in helping participants remember their experiences.

Description of the study:

I am interested in learning about your experiences in residential school and about what your life has been like since then because I think that it is important for you to be able to tell your story and for other people to hear it. By telling your story, others who have had similar experiences may feel that they are not alone and may someday have the courage to tell their stories. It is also important for people who have never experienced residential schools to hear your stories so that they may then be better able to understand what it was like and what effects it may have had on peoples' lives.

A. First of all, would you tell me a little bit about why you decided to participate in this project?

B. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the residential school that you attended.
1. How were you brought to the school? What did you think/feel/do about that? What did your parents think/feel/do?
2. What happened when you arrived there? What did you think/feel/do about that?
3. Who ran the school? Who else was there? What did you think/feel about that?
4. What did these people do? What did you think of feel about them?
5. What was a typical day like? What did you think/feel/do about that?
6. What about your family? Did they visit? What did you think/feel/do about that?
7. How long were you there? What did you think/feel/do about that?
8. What are some of the positive things that you remember from residential school?
9. What are some of the negative things that you remember from residential school?
10. What thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors do you still have that you think are related to your residential school experiences?

C. Now I'd like to ask you about your family relationships after you left residential school.
1. What was your relationship with your family like, e.g. parents, sisters, brothers, others when you left residential school? What did you think/feel/do about that? What is your relationship with your family (of origin) like now?
2. What was it like to try to establish a relationship with a potential marriage partner?
3. What was it like to be a mother / father?
4. What was it like to be a grandparent?
5. Do you think that the residential school experience affects your family relationships in any way now? Please describe/explain.
6. What people, activities or things have helped you most since leaving residential school?

D. Is there anything else that you would like to say, anything that we may have missed?

I would like to thank you very much for taking the time and having the courage to come out and talk about your experiences. I would like to talk with you again after all the interviews are done to present some of the ideas that come out of this study so that you can give me some feedback and advice about whether I have accurately understood what you have told me. Would you be open to this?

***This interview guide was used for the interview done by the researcher.**

Interview guide two.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE*

RESPONDENT PROFILE: (interviewer's observations including location of interview, external influences, alcohol, drugs, family pressures and general impression of respondents situation and mood)

AGE NOW: GRADE LEVEL ATTAINED:
NAME OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL ATTENDED:
WHAT YEAR STARTED R/S [Residential school]: HOW LONG AT R/S:
TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE BEFORE R/S:

WERE YOU GIVEN A DIFFERENT NAME? IF SO FOR WHAT REASON?

DAILY ROUTINE (including meals, work, school, recreation):

DRESS/HAIR:

SUBJECTS STUDIED: LANGUAGE:

CULTURE: RELIGION:

DISCIPLINE (TYPES AND REASONS FOR):

SIBLING INTERACTION:

FAMILY INTERACTION:

FAMILY VISITATION:

SKILLS LEARNED/ACQUIRED:

SKILLS NOT ACQUIRED:

POSITIVE POINTS OF R/S:

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF R/S:

FEELINGS ABOUT THE R/S EXPERIENCE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER, INCLUDING NOW:

EFFECTS AS YOU SEE IT OF R/S EXPERIENCE:

THINGS YOU LIKED THE MOST AT R/S:

THINGS YOU DISLIKED THE MOST AT R/S:

GENERAL COMMENTS (interviewer and respondent):

***This interview guide was used for the ten interviews done for the Willow Counselling Services study.**

Appendix B: Written Consent Form

Initial consent form.

A qualitative study of the meaning of residential school experiences for First Nations peoples:
Impact on self and relationships with others.

To participants in this study:

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The subject of my master's thesis is: First Nations persons' experiences during and after residential schooling. I am interviewing First Nations people in Alberta who have attended residential school. You are one of eight participants. One assistant and myself will be involved in the study.

As part of this study, you are being asked to participate in one or two, two hour interviews, depending on whether or not the initial interview is long enough for you to say all that you wish to say. You will also be asked to comment on the findings that come out of this study which will probably take thirty to forty-five minutes. Interviews will be scheduled at a time and place that is mutually convenient. The interview will focus on your experiences of residential school and on your life since that time, especially in regards to relationships with other people, particularly family members. As the interviews proceed, I may ask an occasional question for clarification or further understanding, but mainly my part will be to listen to you tell about your experiences during and since residential school. After all interviews are complete, I will ask you to review my written description and interpretations of your experiences for accuracy and to give you an opportunity to add any other ideas, information, advice or feedback that you may have at that time.

It is understood that talking about your experiences may be stressful and uncomfortable for you, and every effort will be made to assist you throughout the interview(s). If you feel the need, a counsellor will be available to you. You will also be given a list of community support resources that may be useful.

My goal is to analyze the materials from your interview in order to better understand your experiences and those of other people who have attended residential school. I am interested in the concrete details of your life story, what it was like to attend residential school, what your life has been like since attending residential school, and what that has meant to you. As part of my thesis, I may compose the materials from your interview(s) as a narrative or life story in your own words. I may also wish to you use some of the interview material for journal articles or presentations to interested groups, or for instructional purposes in my work. I may wish to write a book based on my thesis.

Each interview will be audio and/or videotaped and later transcribed by me and/or my assistant on a computer word processor and saved on disk. In all written materials and oral presentations in which I might use materials from your interview(s), I will not use your name, names of people close to you, or the name of your community unless you give written permission for me to do so. Transcripts will be typed with an alias of your choice substituted for your own name. All audio/videotapes, computer disks and paper copies of interview material remain the property of the researcher. At such time that this material is no longer required for research purposes, it will be destroyed.

You may withdraw at any time from the interview process. You may withdraw your consent to have specific portions of transcripts used, if you notify me at the end of the interview series. If I were to want to use any materials in any other way, I would ask for your additional written consent.

In signing this form, you are assuring me that you will make no financial claims for the use of the material in your interview(s).

If, at any time, you have any questions at all about what will happen during this study, I will be glad to explain any part in more detail.

I, ______________________________ have read the above statement and agree to participate as an interviewee under the conditions stated above. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Signature of witness: ________________________________

Signature of interviewer: ________________ Principle researcher: Yvonne Halkow Phone: 428-6302 (ofc)

Adapted from an example in Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (1987) p. 201.

Revised consent form.

Written Consent Form*

A qualitative study of the meaning of residential school experiences
for First Nations peoples: Impact on self and relationships with others.

To participants in this study:

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The subject of my master's thesis is: First Nations persons' experiences during and after residential schooling. You are one of eighteen people participating in this study. One assistant and myself are involved in the study.

You have been asked to participate in an interview done by Gloria Halfe on behalf of myself and Willow Counselling Services Inc. and I would like to study your written interview in order to better understand your experiences and those of other people who have attended residential school. I am interested what it was like to attend residential school, what your life has been like since attending residential school, and what that has meant to you.

Each interview has been typewritten by my assistant on a computer word processor and saved on disk. Interviews have been typed with a different name substituted for your own name.

All computer disks and paper copies of interview material remain the property of the researcher. At such time that this material is no longer required for research purposes, it will be destroyed.

I may also wish to use some of the interview material for journal articles or presentations to interested groups, or for instructional purposes in my work. In any written material and oral presentation in which I might use material from your interview, I will not use your name, names of people close to you, or the name of your community unless you give written permission for me to do so.

If I were to want to use any materials in any other way, I would ask for your additional written consent.

You may withdraw at any time from the study. You may withdraw your consent to have specific portions of transcripts used, if you notify me at the end of the interview series and before any interview materials are published.

If, at any time, you have any questions at all about this study, I will be glad to explain any part in more detail. Phone 403-428-6302 (office).

I, ______________________________ have read the above statement and agree to allow Yvonne Halkow to use materials from my interview for this research study under the conditions stated above. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signatures: of participant _______________ of witness _______________

of principle researcher
Yvonne Halkow ____________________ Date _________________

***Consent form used for the ten participants of the Willow Counselling Services study.**

Appendix C: Participant Narratives

The following narratives were created from each participant's interview transcript. They consist almost entirely of participants own words, with minor grammatical adjustments to improve the flow of each story.

Matthew

I attended Blue Quills school in St. Paul from 1937 to 1944 and reached Grade eight. From 1935, I've got a photo when I started. I do not remember everything but a lot of things.

From 1935 and 1936 when I went to school, I remember quite a bit...then came 1939 when the Second World War started. Then from there, it was during the war that we were in school. As the years went by, the school progressed a little bit...I mean by sports.

At first they had no place to play hockey in the wintertime and during summer we played baseball and fastball. Then in the wintertime, the bigger boys like my age group got skates and we built the first hockey rink. I don't remember which year they made the first skating rink. From there, once the rink was made, I think the way I see it, a lot of the boys, their schooling more or less was taken away the sport because they liked playing hockey. When they started school they started playing hockey and going to school. Hockey took a lot of their minds off schooling and the boys as we got older we had very good teams. We played hockey as soon as we got off school. Most of the boys from our team were from Blue Quills, almost the same age level.

The kids were from different reserves like Cold Lake, Kehewin, Beaver Lake, Frog Lake. We teamed up with them. Once we returned home to Saddle Lake, we had our own team.

I don't remember anybody at our age level to go to high school. They were just discharged as they were old enough to get discharged. The ones who took off a lot were let go. I took off sometimes, too. It was not that bad in residential school but it was loneliness that took the best of us at times or the reason why we took off. The loneliness was greatest in the fall, probably because most of us were very close to our parents. We didn't do like the kids do now, we just didn't go here or there, we just followed our parents and what they did, or what they told us to do and what not to do, and we stayed like that. That's why we grew up to be fairly good people...we were not violent. Our people were...are humble and poor people. They told us what was good and what was not good.

They told us why people go to jail. With all those things eventually a person becomes hated but some people nowadays are gifted...you grow up in the slums or poverty, you try and maintain or level off that life like improving that lifestyle, like being a good person, like a person is half respected, all those things. Like marriage, for example. Me and my wife will be celebrating our 46th wedding anniversary soon. A lot of people in this generation break away from each other. We have that strong advantage in our family but some of our daughters do not do that. They go down one notch by breaking up instead of staying together.

I am somewhat biased about marriage of today because through the religion we received at residential school and at home, we were taught to respect marriage therefore many of us have stayed married for several years but some of my children have divorced their spouses. This I do not agree with. Me and T. have been married almost 46 years.

We had a very good life. Our father was not a farmer but he had some good hay grounds and he worked out a lot, threshing, picking rocks, fencing, stooking...which was all hard labor. We sometimes had a garden. And he got along with everyone and well known in the surrounding reserves because he was an athlete. He was a runner who was fast; also a good trapper and hunter which most Natives are not known for that...something he was good at. White people figure every Indian is a good hunter but that is a sour idea. Some Indians never hunt, some white men are better hunters.

My father started his athletic career in Red Deer Industrial school. Once he returned to Saddle Lake, he got married and continued being athletic. He participated locally and became well known. Once he won a horse against A. who bet against him. He won him but I don't remember what he did with the horse. Also, people were betting on the side for the race but the main one was between him and A. It took place on a flat by E.'s...it was our reserve's spots grounds at that time because it was level. It's very close to what is now the Complex (Admin Bldg). He never really mentioned his residential school days as to how he was treated.

Our parents came to see us once a month because they used wagons by summer, sleds by winter. I seen my brothers and sister all the time. By the time I was taken into residential school, my sisters had all gone home.

The nuns did not mind if we spoke Cree. Our supervisor Mr. D, then including Father B, the head priest... then we were not allowed to speak Cree in our own playground, but if the Master was around we would get punished for that. If no one was around otherwise we would not get punished. Then finally they didn't bother us about speaking Cree but at one time we did get punished for it.

We used to get punished by the strap once in awhile. At one time, I seen the Master, Mr. D, use a horse whip, I think he used it on the boys but he would do it in the washroom without having the rest of us see it. We used to hear them scream and cry. Other time if we lost something we got whipped like for losing a sock or a mitt.

We all had numbers. There was so many of us we were crowded. We were always in a crowded place.

We had denim overalls...we had to wear them. If we went outside, we had to wear over them to save our clothes from dirtying them. Every Friday we changed clothes plus a bath. We were not allowed outside once we took a bath. Most of the boys were clipped...they had flat tops or brush cuts like the boys in the service. The ones that had nits, they got shaved...also if they took off, they got shaved. In the photo, the ones who got shaved are the ones who had run away. Some even had scabs especially if they had gone home so someone had to do something about it.

During our days at residential school, we were a healthy group...that is why we survived. There were some who did not survive it. Especially many of us had been alcoholics after residential school and we survived because we were strong. Many did not survive alcoholism, they died. I've been into sobriety for almost twenty years.

In conclusion, I think the kids that were treated bad were bad and the ones who were good were treated good.

Sara

Our father hunted a lot so we lived on wild meat and everyone would work together to plant a large garden in the spring. He worked hard to feed a family of ten: six sons and four daughters. I was used to working hard by the time I attended Blue Quills... it made no difference.

We attended church with our parents quite regularly before we attended residential school. Our parents were both Roman Catholic.

I had no nickname. I always used Sara.

I started Blue Quills residential school in 1941 and stayed until I was sixteen years old, finishing Grade eight.

We attended half a day of classes. We worked in shifts in the dining area and did sewing for myself and the children.

I supervised some girls and some happened to be my nieces...either my brother's or my sister's daughters which was a plus for me and it also gave me a chance to know them better. I supervised during and after classes.

When I used to supervise the children, I would let them steal food and I would allow them to play or roam freely so I could have fun too.

We made our own dresses but I disliked the under clothes and the long stockings. The type of dress was not important to me because all of our clothes were the old style. Being clean was what was important. Hair was cut short and shaved above the neckline. We were very poor at home so what we received in residential school was adequate for me.

We studied arithmetic, spelling, catechism, reading and science.

Religion was Roman Catholic in the Latin context.

Language spoken was English most of the time but Cree when we were with our siblings, classmates or friends. The nuns never said anything when they caught us. We spoke both languages in school but had to refrain to Cree when we returned home because our mother did not speak or understand English. Our father understood and spoke both though.

White culture was taught.

I was never harshly disciplined because I was a pet to the nuns. I was treated good but some were treated rough. I worked hard and that was probably one of the reasons I was treated good.

I spoke or interacted a lot with my siblings and I was never punished for speaking Cree. I was close to my family and I only seen my brothers on Sundays. The boys were in one area or wing and the girls were in the other. During our recreation period which involved playing ball during the summer and sliding or Christmas concerts during the winter, it would give us a chance to interact with our siblings... the boys would be allowed to join the girls. It was a lot of fun.

Our parents visited at least twice a month. Travel was only by wagon and the residential school was about twenty-five miles away from home. I was very lonesome.

I got an education, learned sewing, cooking and taking care of children. I was satisfied with what I learned.

I feel I did not lose my culture because I did attend the sweat lodge when I returned home to visit during the summer holidays. I gained and acquired skills by being in residential school because I would have had to work hard at home anyway because my mother and father believed in working hard. I worked hard... it made no difference whether I was at residential school or home.

I remember one Sister very well because we became good friends. I have fond memories of residential school as I was treated good and I was also a pet to the nuns. I was probably treated good because I worked hard. I did not really dislike anything...like I said I was treated good.

Since both of my parents were Roman Catholic we also acquired the religion in Blue Quills and it was taught in the Latin context. I lost my religion shortly after I returned home because the man I married was of a different denomination...we're with the Pentecostal church and our faith has always been strong.

I feel I gained a lot by being in residential school as I received an education and learned or developed skills like sewing and cooking which were good preparation because I have a large family of thirteen children...twelve of my own and one adopted son. I learned to delegate my household duties to my children because the nuns delegated their work to us.

Ruth

I started Blue Quills school at the age of nine in 1943 and left at age fourteen. I was nine when I first started. We were free at that time about when to start as Family Allowances were not given out yet, i.e. we were not forced to start. But once they started giving Family Allowances out, children had no choice but to start at a certain age and attend till they were at least sixteen.

I used to go to church with my parents...Roman Catholic church that is. My dad would harness the horses and we would go by wagon. We seldom missed church.

I did not have a nickname...I always used only Ruth.

At residential school, we went to mass before breakfast. The nun would clap her hands to wake us up at 6 a.m. Many of the children were tired. We got used to getting up. Religion was Roman Catholic in the Latin context. They did not really bug us about sin. I remember one Father, he used to preach and cry and holler at the same time. They used to make us go to confession in a little room every time we went to Communion.

For breakfast, we had buns and porridge which had a burnt taste. At the beginning of school (fall), we took some raw or cooked berries along from home and the nuns provided us cream. For fruit, we ate plums...we never ate pies. During the summer, we drank goats milk. I hated it. They made us drink it because I was kind of skinny.

We spoke English but we communicated in Cree with our friends (I had three very nice friends at residential school)and siblings whenever we could. We did not get caught. We spoke Cree towards each other...all the kids only spoke Cree at that time. We were just beginning to learn English. Not like now, four year olds speak English before learning Cree. They seem to be born with English words. The young mothers teach English to their young.

We were taught the white culture.

For recreation in the winter, we would go tobogganing on a hill close to the school. Some also skated but I never did. I would just watch. During the summer, we would go for picnics. The nuns would deliver us by truck to Owlseye. They would take along Indian popcorn (like homemade lard) and we would crush that to put on our bread and they would also take homemade stew along. The kids used to play ball but I didn't.

We also had movies on special occasions. We would have to line up the benches for the nuns. The movies used to be very interesting.

Some kids had it good through favoritism. The same room was our playroom and every once in awhile we used to do exercises like marching and the nuns would bring us movies. We had to place the benches and they would darken the room. The movies were so interesting.

On Sundays for church, we wore black dresses with white stockings. Our winter clothes were ski pants and green uniforms.

We studied math, language, spelling. I was not good at math so there was a girl who taught me and I finally caught on. We had classes all day. They used to make us sing and they also taught us art which I was not good at therefore I did not like it.

We worked in the kitchen dish washing, laundry room, dining room for priests and nuns, and supervising, ironing, etc. I used to supervise some young girls. I would bathe them, washed and comb their hair, and dressed them up. I was given that responsibility.

At one time, I worked in the kitchen but I was moved to the dish washing area because I got hit by a big bread slicer by accident. Some of us worked in the laundry room and we hung the clothes on the line and we also had to iron the sheets. One time I worked in the potato room. We would put the new potatoes in the tub to soak overnight. We prepared them one day ahead of time. I remember it was a very small room.

The older kids were responsible for scrubbing the stairs. Once, a big nun pushed me down the stairs.

I also had the duty of washing the priests' dirty handkerchiefs. The nuns would get mad at me if I tore one.

We did no garden work. It was done by a man whom we called Brother. He was Polish and he was very nice to us and he would give us vegetables. His English was very poor. He also did the baking and he would give us buns but we had to steal the butter...usually a pound so we could butter our buns.

Now sometimes I am sorry I quit school at the age of fourteen. I had been in the sewing room during my last year and I was starting to learn how to sew. We were taught by a Sister. Regina stayed till she was sixteen and she can sew very well. Just the other day she sewed a dress for me.

The strap and scrubbing floors were used for discipline. They used a thick strap and we had to lay on the table with only the underpants on. One time a Sister grabbed me roughly because I was playing with my cousin and she thought I was touching her in the wrong area. I was only pressing her limbs.

The nuns were very strict, the priests did not interfere. The nuns did very little work, they delegated the work to us older ones. The nuns did not work hard. They delegated all the work. We even worked in the priests' and nuns' dining room. There was more than one priest and several nuns.

I used to like it when Christmas came along. They would bring the boys over to our area: that was the only time I seen my brothers. They gave us treats like popcorn balls and some candies.

We came home only for the summer otherwise our parents would visit us in the parlor. At Easter, we did not come home because traveling by wagon was hard and our parents could not come down. Once in awhile, my father would go and sell hay in town with the hayrack and he would stop by to see us or pick us up. Once while me and my brother were in town with him, he decided to drink. By the time we went by the school, he was drunk so my brother went through. The next morning my father had to return us to school. It was a very short holiday.

Positive points of residential school was receiving an education and experience like sewing, ironing, dish washing, etc. It was good preparation. I am sorry I quit too soon.

There was one priest who was very nice. He came to our reserve to do mass a few times and he stayed for a few years but finally left. All the girls cried when he left because he was so nice.

I liked Christmas get-togethers, seeing my brothers, and the movies.

I disliked cod liver oil. We had to take it every morning. They did not use a spoon, they would just pour it down our throats. Some would vomit in the bathroom. I disliked working with the Sister on the first floor. I don't remember if she ever smiled. She never wore a happy face...she always looked like she was mad.

I remember I had bad blemishes on my face and the Sister who was in charge, somewhat as a nurse, used to put black stuff on my face that looked like axle grease. I used to hate going into the dining room area to eat in front of everyone. I would cry and the tears would go over the grease. I was very embarrassed. It is something I will never forget and it made me not want to stay in the residential school. They could have allowed me to eat alone elsewhere to avoid the embarrassment. Once I got older, the blemish problem went away. The effects of this are shame and ridicule which I have put behind me.

One time me and Regina had tonsillitis. It was painful. We were kept in the dorm for a few days. I remember she was in more pain than I was. I became kind of run down and skinny so they gave us milk to drink.

I also remember they treated one girl very mean. They would pour milk on the table and make her lap it up. The nuns would go around the corner and giggle from there...they made fun of her.

Towards the end, I could not be forced to return to school. The nuns were too strict but the priests did not interfere.

I also remember in Grade one, the nun that was teaching us would flirt with the priest. They would make us put our heads down on our desks and they would tell us to sleep while they went around the corner to smooch. I guess they liked each one another. Many seen them do these things.

In Grade one, I used to sit close to my (future) husband and his friend, and I would tease them. They used to hit me hard on my shoulders and arms.

My brother really hated returning to residential school...he had to be carried out and he used to cry and scream. Once I started, I would be fine, especially after the first month. I used to get very lonesome during the first month that I would sit by the window.

There was a lot of excitement when it came time to return home. A truck used to deliver us home (a large farm truck, probably a one ton). Once I remember I got so excited that I slipped two different shoes on. I was so shy, I hid my feet all the way home.

Shortly after I left residential school and returned home, I got married but I kept on attending church with my husband and children almost every Sunday. We would take rabbit and duck along and the men would make fire for us women and we would cook. It was a happy occasion.

Peggy

I started at Blue Quills residential school in 1944...I was only seven. I left when I was fifteen after reaching Grade eight.

I lived on the reserve before I went to residential school. The only language known was Cree before we attended the residential school...I did not know one word of English. We attended sweats, Sundances and pow-wows with our grandparents. Our mother died when I was a little girl.

My nickname before I attended residential school was As'es. I used Peggy at the residential school and used my nickname when I returned home.

I was scared stiff before attending. All I could smell was the disinfectant, and they used coal oil to kill the lice, and they would cut the hair short.

During our stay, we had to accept it as it was. The first time I seen a nun in my life, she seemed like an alien, and some of them were tough.

We were up at 6 a.m.... sometimes at 5 a.m. if we decided to go to mass and it was not compulsory to attend mass.

Classes were from 9 till 4 p.m. Before supper, we would go to the rec room, then we would go to the lavatory to get cleaned up for supper. After supper, we went outside but we had to get permission first. There was no such thing as homework. Sometimes we would go to the library but we had to get permission to go there too.

We wore our hair short like a page boy cut. We wore canvas dresses, petticoats with pockets.

Subjects we studied were history, English, math, Catechism (in Catechism, we had to kneel on a cement floor).

We were taught the Roman Catholic religion in the Latin context. We spoke English and were taught the white culture.

We got punished if we were caught talking while we were in the line-up for supper or lunch. We cannot join the others for recreation like playing ball, skating or movies on Friday nights.

We seen our siblings only on weekends. Parents were only allowed to go to the parlor or in the shacks which were one mile away from the school. Ten families could sleep there and they had to bring their own bedding.

Skills I acquired were skating, crocheting, knitting and cooking. In theory, I could have had more courses, for example, public speaking. This could have prepared us better for the future.

We should be thankful they taught us homemaking skills and they educated us.

Negative aspects of residential school: About one hundred girls asked to stand around rec room to watch when one got strapped by a nun while four girls held her down. They shaved one's head if they ran away.

I liked picnics the most. I disliked cod liver oil the most. They poured it out of a jug into our mouths. The food was gross...burnt porridge, liver and burnt potatoes.

After, I was glad or relieved to get out. It was like getting out of jail.

I think I was brainwashed. The nuns talked so much about sinning, they did not teach us about the birds and the bees. I thought I would get pregnant if I kissed a boy.

The happiest moments during residential school was when grandma and grandpa arrived to pick us up for a visit or to return us home.

John

Before going to residential school, we lived on the reserve and had small farming interests.

I started residential school in 1949 at age nine and stayed for five years reaching Grade five. I was scared before I started. I started residential school with all Cree as my language and no English.

There was times it wasn't bad. Some fun times especially when it came to movies which was twice a month. Ballgames in the summertime, skating in the wintertime. At that time, it was not an easy thing to do but to attend residential school...but something had to be done. Naturally, at age fourteen, it wasn't hard to say I didn't have to go to school anymore.

I had no nickname and used John only.

Our daily routine was get up, make bed, clean up for breakfast, breakfast, class till late afternoon. Then we were free to use the playground or roam the wooded area. For recreation, in summer, softball and soccer. In winter, there was a flooded area for skating or you could hike half a mile to a hill for sliding.

We showered once a week and changed clothes. We went to the barber every two months which was usually one of the supervisors.

We studied reading, writing and some math. White culture was taught in residential school and religion was the United church. I learned to read a little and communicate in English a little bit and a teacher was a novice artist.

Residential school was better than the alternative... integrate into a white school which would have been devastating.

No discipline was used on me...I didn't misbehave.

I was separated from my sisters. We could not wave at each other.

The separations from family were unbearable. Visitations were far and few. The worst aspect of residential school was the isolation from parents and home. Loneliness almost killed me.

I became a loner, something I would have done anyway I guess. I also became a survivor...there was no one to care for you.

I liked recreation and funtimes the most and disliked the loneliness and hunger. We hunted rabbits in the bush for extra meals.

Mark

I attended Blue Quills residential school from 1947 until about 1956 from Grades one through eight...then I attended one year of high school in St. Paul while I was residing in Blue Quills.

Before going to residential school, we lived on the reserve, went to church and lived the Indian way.

I never had a nickname before I attended the residential school.

In the mornings, we had a choice whether we wanted to attend church or not. Religion was Roman Catholic in the Latin context. I used to get sore knees from kneeling, especially during Lent (we prayed more). The boys had to hang their shirt by their bedposts to signify that they were going to attend church so someone would wake us up and bedtime was about 8:30 p.m. which was quite early and no one wanted to go to bed yet.

Classes were all day. I had a very good teacher and that was Sister P.

We dressed well on Sundays but we wore coveralls the rest of the time. Our hair was cut short.

We studied science, arithmetic, language, art, catechism and music.

We spoke both English and Cree, but did not get caught speaking Cree. The residential school had no Cree instructors. Now many schools include the Cree language in their curriculum, and they should have included in the curriculum during those years we spent in residential schools. They seemed to not recognize the Indian language or culture, for example, they taught us that Sundances were Satan's work.

They taught the white culture. They tried to steer us away from our culture more or less. They should have had some Elders to teach the culture to pass on wisdom and the Indian way.

For discipline, the strap was used. They were very strict but I guess they were stricter before our time to some of the older kids.

One time my brother ran away from residential school. I was only five at the time and I was climbing trees by our house when I seen my parents come running out. S. had a pair of coveralls on and I guess they ran all night...they were about fourteen or fifteen years of age. When they returned, their heads were shaved as a means of punishment for running away.

I had one sister and one brother in the residential school. Sibling interaction was allowed with my brother since we were in the same are but not with my sister who was in another area. The boys were not allowed to talk to the girls.

We seen our parents only during the holidays.

I didn't learn or acquire any skills in particular. I was an artist by a natural acquired or a God given gift, I should say. I should mention the Art contest in 1955. There was a contest on Nutrition which included all the residential schools in Canada. There was a number of residential schools in Alberta like the one at Poundmakers and Brockett. Anyway, this contest included the Grades seven and eight. Sister P. gave me strong encouragement. She asked me to try to come up with my own idea so I drew a fat man and his son talking to a slim person. Behind the fat man, I drew a wheelbarrow full of vegetables. The picture was sort of a cartoon type. In the background, I drew a cow by the fence with a slim person standing close by who had on an old torn buckskin jacket with fringes and a feather and who was eating a carrot. Next all I needed was a title so I chose 'Be a good farmer.'

The time came for judging, which was done by the principal, priests, supervisors and sisters. All the entries which placed were selected by the principal and four were chosen to be sent away to Edmonton. Mine won second. The one that won was from Legoff and he was a very good artist. Canada selected four from every province. About two months later, Sister P. came running to me (she was always a very energetic lady) with papers in her hand. She announced Blue Quills took first and fourth. The story appeared on a Native paper called The Messenger. It was similar to what we now call The Windspeaker. I won five hundred dollars. At that time it was a lot of money...it would probably be equivalent to our five thousand dollars now. I gave the school two hundred and fifty dollars so they could buy encyclopedias. I bought myself a guitar. It was one prominent event in my life at Blue Quills.

We were also in navy cadets and I played the baritone and sax. We traveled to Vancouver and stayed for eight weeks. We went marching in Stanley Park for some special event on Victoria day.

I have a good feeling about my experience in residential school. I learned a lot, I received a good education and most of my years were good.

They were very strict. We were treated good and bad. Recollections seem like jail...their regulations were strict. I seen it with my own eyes.

I disliked the meals most, especially the soup which always had parsley in it, and we had to have castor oil once a week.

I liked the bread the most...the baker was very good. He used to surprise us. He also did the garden and attended to the root cellars. There was a funnel-like culvert that was used for throwing potatoes into the root cellar that we used to play in for something to do. When the Natives took over the school in 1973, this gentleman cried...he did not want to leave. He had to leave when the nuns left.

I strive for the Indian way now. I feel that it helps me a lot but it is a very slow process. I've been tested many times which has made me strong in my faith. Maybe if I was weak I would have turned back to alcohol and I would have crumbled. While we are trying to be strong, we can easily be discouraged in many ways. Elders say Never put yourself down if one asks you for help. I used to think I was unworthy but now I help whoever I can.

Carol

I attended Blue Quills residential school from 1950 to 1953. Then I started day school on the Saddle Lake Reserve to grade five.

Before residential school, we attended the Roman Catholic church with my parents quite regularly. We were poor but happy. We lived on wild meat and planted a garden every year. We were a big happy family.

I did not have Cree name. I always used Carol.

At residential school, we got up at 6 a.m., got washed, then down to breakfast in a single file. We had to go to church every morning, confession every Friday, classes from 9 to 4 p.m. Religion was Roman Catholic in the Latin context. I made my first Communion in Blue Quills in 1952, which made me feel great.

We studied reading, writing, arithmetic, but no science. The language used was English most of the time. We spoke Cree at times and the nuns did not say anything.

White culture only in residential school.

We learned embroidery, sewing, mending boys socks and underwear. We washed and waxed the dining room floor by hand, so I learned how to wax floors when we received tiles at home. Before we had ordinary wooden floors, which we had to scrub.

We had light chores to do, but the bigger girls did the heavier chores. We did some sweeping, washing steps or stairs, helping in mending, and helped in the laundry room.

We wore uniforms.

I helped in the kitchen, wiping pots but did not have to cook. I did not learn how to cook as I was too small yet. The nuns and usually three big girls did the cooking. The work was delegated. The nuns worked along with us...they worked too.

I never seen any girls get strapped, but they would get sent to bed early. The boys did get straps though. We had a show every Thursday. If we were bad, we could receive penance, which was no show.

I was close to my sister Violet and my brother Pete was in too but I did not see him as often for he was in a different area.

Our parents visited us at least once a month and we came home for Easter and Christmas holidays.

What I didn't like at residential school was we had to take turns using skates...and every Saturday we made our own beds (changed sheets). We had to take cod liver oil pills...we did not take it in liquid form.

I enjoyed my experience in residential school. Nothing was bad. I got lonesome a lot, especially on weekends. I disliked my first year there. I did not care much for the nuns. Two were mean but they never hurt me. I did not like the priest. I can't remember his name.

I liked the picnics at Three Mile Lake. We had to walk at least three miles with two nuns and take turns carrying our baskets of food. We used to look forward to them. We would fry our food once we got to the lake. I remember my cousin, who died in 1972, used to enjoy them a great deal too.

Jackie

I attended Edmonton Indian Residential school in St. Albert from about 1950 to 1959 till I was sixteen. Then I left and attended grade nine in Spedden.

Before I went to residential school, I lived on a farm on the reserve.

Mom and dad would take us to Spedden by team...then we would go by train...then someone from the school would pick us up. Indian Affairs would pay our fare only at the beginning of the school year but if anyone went back later, their parents had to pay the fare.

Upon arrival at the residential school, we were allowed to wash ourselves, not like Blue Quills...they were put into a tub and they would get scrubbed by two or three people.

It is quite an experience when you have to start off without knowing English. I only knew Cree when I first left home.

I was not given a different name in residential school.

We would rise at about 6:45 a.m.. We would make our own bed. We had chores to do before classes but I cannot remember what they were. Classes from 9 a.m. till 3:30 p.m. We had chores to do after class. Supper was at 6 p.m.

Church every morning in the chapel. It was a one hour service and I cannot remember if it was before or after breakfast. The girls would sit on one side and the boys on the other side. We were segregated. Religion taught was United church.

I hated porridge. We also had to eat biscuits which were a healthy food containing vitamins and I disliked them... they used to make me sick.

One of our chores was working in the laundry room. We did not have to peel potatoes...the school had a machine to peel potatoes and carrots automatically...all we had to do was wash them.

We used to race and Mildred would always beat me...we were the same age. Finally I went in the older girls' group and I won the race. My closest friends were the late M., and B....she was my protector.

Also, during the May 24th long weekend, we had a field day. We would have potato sack races, amongst other things.

Our dresses were all made the same but they were not uniforms...same shoes and socks. Our hair was cut short.

We studied basic subjects...arithmetic, spelling, social studies, science, English and art.

They did not teach us about the birds and the bees or personal hygiene. I had to go to my girlfriend to get knowledge about the period. They did not tell us ahead of time about changes or sex. I guess they did but the age limit was sixteen to see films on sex education.

We spoke English but spoke Cree amongst ourselves. They did not detest it. White was the only culture taught.

For discipline, the principal did the strapping. Straps were only for running away or swearing.

I also remember in Grade one, I refused to read out loud because I was extremely shy so the teacher spoke to my brother Stanley and he had to pressure me.

He told me not to be afraid...he had to bribe me. I think he also said I would get punished if I did not read.

I seen my siblings a lot. The boys and girls would be put together during recreation outside or in the same recreation room.

We used to have a lot of fun snow sledding. I remember one time I froze my earlobes (I was about 12 or 13)...or when we had Easter egg hunts at Easter, or picnics by the river. And we also learned how to pick wild onions.

My parents came only once...it was hard for them to travel. We went home at Christmas or Easter if our parents had the money to pay for the trip. We used to visit our parents in a parlor...the school had two parlors or visiting areas.

I was in the church choir but played no instruments. I learned how to skate and dance. We had a social every Friday.

I learned supervision...some had to learn to supervise the younger kids.

The principal, matrons and supervisors were strict...they taught us how to clean and scrub floors. They domesticated us. They were so strict...we were scared that there would be some misgoing ons which were forbidden. The boys and girls snuck around but there was not mingling with the boys but we did flirt with them.

In their education system, they tried to bring out the good in you. We had talent shows and they encouraged students. Main thing they taught me was how to be organized: doing things on time. I still practice that with my office work and outside.

They did not teach the Indian culture like spiritualism, language, etc. and I feel they really should have.

I see no effects of residential school in being away from my family. My parents had a large family at home besides us so they had all they could handle. I had three sisters who attended residential school and they are S., L. and E., and also two brothers, S. and L.

I used to get very lonesome upon our return to residential school in the fall but eventually we would get used to it.

Gerald

I spent a few years in St. Albert and only one year at Blue Quills. Blue Quills was a better residential school. I spent grades 1 - 7 in St. Albert or Poundmaker's. I left because my mother passed away in 1958. I was 12 years old.

My name was Champeg: given to me by my father. Gerald was used in residential school.

At St. Albert residential school, the religion was Roman Catholic. Church was early morning which was compulsory to attend and included fifteen minutes of kneeling and saying the rosary. I should have become a priest.

We wore blue cover-alls and our hair was short.

We went to school half a day. We studied arithmetic, spelling, and science. They should have taught Cree. No Native culture was included at all. We could not speak Cree in school and if caught, we would get punished.

We also learned a bit of art, but I was not very interested. B. was a very good artist. I don't know why she did not make a career out of it; and I also heard her son is also a good artist. You should interview her and ask her, she may still have some of her work.

We were in a cadets band and I played the saxophone, a little of the violin and banjo. We did not travel much at all, not like some other cadet bands in the school. We only traveled in the area. We had very good concerts. L. was in the band ahead of me and his group had gone to Vancouver, B.C. for two months, July and August. I remember when it came time to practice someone would holler rehearsal time! We usually played at the Christmas concerts. It was very awesome and we practiced two months ahead of time.

For recreation, we played hockey in the winter, fastball in the summer, and also track and field.

We had to milk and feed Holstein cows two times a day, morning and evening. We were assigned three cows to milk, two on machine and one by hand. Several big pails were filled twice a day. The milk was hauled into the kitchen area and some was kept for cream. One time me and G. were just finishing up when one of us tripped on a cream can full of cream and we both got strapped: five whacks on each hand. The principal did the strapping with a strap that was four inches wide and one inch thick.

Meals were often boiled kidneys and potatoes more than once a day: dinner and supper...and bread and butter.

We received fifteen cents on Saturdays so we could run to the store for candy.

In St. Albert, we did not see anyone at all. A. used to come and visit and he would bring us goodies. We were one hundred miles away from home and they used to have us catch the locomotive, a steam engine which runs on coal, from Spedden to Edmonton. When we returned, we were picked up in Spedden. We were allowed to interact with our siblings at the school.

Now I know that the residential school system gave us no chance to drop out of school and we had no choice but to attend residential school. Now if we still had residential schools, we would have less dropouts and that would be a plus for the children. Sure I think it was bad to have no choice but the good part is we learned a lot out of it and we were disciplined. I did not mind the experience.

A negative aspect of residential school was not being able to see our parents. Other than that, everything was all right. It was all positive.

I wish residential schools were still in effect. Our young people would not be able to drop out of school. They would have no choice.

Marjorie

I lived with my grandparents most of the time because my stepfather did not want me to live with him and my mother, but I more or less went back and forth from my mother's house, then to my Grand-dad's. My grandfather hunted a lot for wildmeat, ducks, deer, rabbits, etc. and he had several sons and three daughters with large families whom I had to often deliver the meat to on horseback. Sometimes I had about ten miles to go to deliver and then another ten miles to return.

Each spring we would plant a large garden for the whole family to maintain their table from and that I also had to deliver often. My grandfather took care of everyone.

We attended Roman Catholic church, not regularly but often enough especially at Christmas and Easter. We attended Sundances every summer. We traveled by team to other reserves like Onion Lake and Frog Lake, and we did a lot of camping. We also went to pilgrimages and other Native cultural activities like feasts, etc. and he also had his own sweatlodge in our back yard in which we participated, or we had to be doorman if we did not go in.

I started residential school when I was about nine years old, about 1955. I was there for three years, left in 1958 and then attended Vilna school.

Someone from the government, probably federal government, came with my mother to Grandpa's house and took me to Blue Quills.

We got to Blue Quills at noon in September or October, before winter anyway. My mother delivered me to the school late because I refused to go and my Grandpa was mad because he left it up to me to attend or not. Dad was in disagreement upon the persistence of my mother and the Indian Affairs person who were there to deliver me to Blue Quills. My Grand-dad had raised me without signing any documentation so my mother had the final say regardless of what. I had started to live with my grandparents at the age of two. My grandmother passed away suddenly so I was returned back to my mother and step-father. My step-father did not want me so my mother took me off to Legoff, another Indian reserve and gave me to a couple. All I remember was the reserve was a long ways from our reserve and I tried to run away a few times. Mr. M was very nice to me, he acted like a father. On the other hand, his wife was not nice to me at all. She was mean so my grandfather finally came to get me. It's funny...when I got older I married a man from Legoff and after twenty-one years, my recollections of the land came back: I remembered the way it looked. I was three years old when this happened. It's funny when you're young and if someone treats you mean you remember. Every time I seen that woman while I was growing up I would run away from her but the man always gave me candy or he was always nice to me. They used to come to Saddle Lake Treaty Days and open a store.

When they first got me to the school, they asked me if I knew anyone there. I said, Yes, I have three cousins whom I refer to as my sisters because Grandpa was raising them too because they had recently lost their mother, who was my mother's younger sister. I also have one brother, who is really my cousin but I refer to him as my brother, also from the same family as my three sisters.

Upon arrival, they put us in round tubs and scrubbed us and denitted us, but my head was clean. I had long hair up to my tailbone and they chopped it off to above my ears. I cried and screamed, and they just grabbed me with both hands, just like a dog; I was so mad. I would not talk decent to anyone after that. My grandfather was so mad at my mother of what they did to my hair because all of us girls had long hair. We did not wear our hair short.

When I first got there, the sisters asked, "What's your real name?" I said, Magineech and they got mad at me. They said, "It's written Marjorie here." I could not read at all; I did not even know my real name. My nickname in Cree sounded similar to Marjorie.

We had to wear uniforms and we had to be very neat. My number was number ninety-eight. We had to get up early every morning and attend church. We had no choice. Religion was Roman Catholic and in Latin, with some sermons and songs in Cree, too. We had to do whatever everyone was doing, either come down or stay upstairs. If we received penance or got into trouble, we had to stay in bed upstairs therefore receive no breakfast or supper. They gave us lickin's with straps. One time I fought just so I could get out of there. The nuns called me muskwa because I was so powerful and I was mean to everybody. I would grab their hair and bite, and steal their stuff, like make-up. I used to get my sisters into trouble because they covered for me. One time I put lipstick all over my mouth. The sister asked me Where did you get it from? I pointed at my sister and got her into trouble. She got so mad at me for getting her into trouble.

I received my first baptism in residential school and also my first Communion. It was so funny when I did my first Communion. I thought I was getting married because I was paired with a male boy and I screamed. The girls had to wear white gowns with veils and the boys wore little suits. He was so shy, too. He had no choice but to stand with me. I guess it reminded me of a wedding that I had attended.

We had meals at 7:30 a.m. We had to wash ourselves each morning and dress ourselves, so the sisters would check us and send us off to class.

We studied arithmetic, spelling and science. We had recreation after supper and sometimes we would do exercises for firmness.

The sisters said if I put my foot down I would pass grade one and I passed it in a short while because my sisters would bring their books down and teach me how to read and also help me with my arithmetic.

We used to see movies like Ben-Hur and Charlie Chaplin and some Holy movies. We used to do drama and do plays like Ole Black Joe. One person would be dressed in black and he would play dead. A couple would play father and mother and have their children around them, and the others would surround the group and sing Ole Black Joe because he had just died. It was a sad play. It was similar to a concert. I used to look forward to drama and Christmas concerts. We all had to sing.

After class, we would stay and wait for supper. I was so glad when it came to mealtime because many of our relatives were in the dining room. I used to look forward to meals or get-togethers...then I would also see my brother.

After supper, we did some chores like dishes, floors and other things which were designated by the sisters. Our chores consisted of washing floors and no one got away with it. Sometimes the nuns would scrub the floors with us so the other nuns would not be mean to us. Some were nice and some were very mean. My favorite was Sister C. Father L. was very nice.

If we had no chore to do, we had to stay in a room with a sister. I cannot remember the exact time for bedtime but we had to wear two piece pajamas but we did not have to wear little caps like the sisters did. One evening, I went into the wrong room and here it was a nun's room. She had no cap on and she was bald. I startled her...she just screamed and I ran away.

Our visits were in ordinary houses made for visiting. The parents and children would camp there. About three families would stay in one if they were related. They came by team with wagon in summer and by sled in winter. We had cold harsh winters and that was the loneliest time of all. The sisters told me not to cry because I would get the other kids lonesome too.

Susan

I decided to participate in this study because it's time for somebody outside of you to hear. For other people...I need them to...I'm emotional...to know that what I experienced was real...what we all experienced was real and I just need them to know what really happened.

We lived in Collinton, Alpine and Siding as far as I know. When I was a year or two old, I was sent to the O'Connell Institute, the Atonement Home and a foster home, Mrs. M's. And some other lady who pissed me off because she wouldn't take me to a show. She wanted me to go to a flower show. I was choked!

I think I was brought to residential school on a Greyhound bus. From Edmonton to Grouard. All I remember was arriving there. I remember getting there because my sister said "You're not my sister. My other sister's here." I was really hurt. Then they took my coat away from me and they took my clothes away from me and they gave them to some other kid. But they only got to wear them on Sundays. They were handed out on Sundays. Each Sunday each kid got different clothes, never the same ones. I was given other old clothes to wear, institution clothes.

The Sisters of Providence and the Oblate Priests ran the school. They had teachers and stuff come in after a bit...I don't know where they came from. They left very quickly...they didn't seem to stay much after a year.

Mostly we had the nuns as teachers. I thought they were real mean at the time I lived there. It seemed like it was all part of...well...it was supposed to be. I thought everybody grew up like that. They would beat you with a razor strap. If you ran away, they would cut your hair...shaved it to here. They made you march two by two. They were scary people...we were terrified of them. The things I saw them do to other people...

They took my sister upstairs when she lost her fork. And she wouldn't tell on anyone else...because, well, she's not a stool pigeon. She was a little kid...she tried to run. She made it to the door and they caught her, took her upstairs. They let us go outside. From outside of the place, I could hear her screaming...and there was nothing I could do to help her. When I saw her later, they had put her to bed. She was bruised from here (points to upper back) down to here (points to calf), and she was swollen. I've never seen anybody beaten like that in my life...even now. Over a fork! Cause somebody hid it on her. They did stuff like that, the nuns...made us tough. We had to be tough, to survive.

They'd give you spankings...beatings for... We were standing around a tree, a bunch of us once...some others were swinging on this tree. And they rounded us all up, hauled us upstairs to the third floor again...and beat us. There was one girl with a boil on her butt...they beat her anyway. They'd stand us there in the dorm...they weren't shy about what they did around us...and we'd all watch.

Once my sister got appendicitis. They didn't know what it was at the time. I woke up in the night...we slept in a big dorm...and I seen somebody go to the bathroom and they fell. I could hear them fall. One of the other kids got up to help her, cause she couldn't walk that far...and they made her lay in bed for days and days. To smile or laugh...it hurt her. They finally took her to the hospital. I was told later that she just made it in time. She would have died. They just put her to bed. We weren't regular people. They were trying to make us Christians...they were trying to make us white. Thank God, we're not white!

They took us to the lake every summer. It was nice. That was our high point. They turned us loose in the bushes. That was real freedom. We could go pick berries and do everything we needed to do, until they'd ring this damn bell to call us back in. That's how they'd call us, with a bell.

Somebody visited, I remember, once. I don't remember who. Somebody did. They put us in this little entranceway when you come in the front door and it was fixed up all nice with plants. It was not at all like the rest of the school. Nobody ever really got to see what it was really like. We were never allowed in there. We had to use our door, not that door.

I had one sister and five brothers there. You weren't allowed to see them except in the refectory. They sat on one side and we sat on the other side. We just saw them there, we didn't get to talk to them...and out on the playground...we seen them out there. In the wintertime, sometimes they'd let you skate with them.

We couldn't do anything about it. We grew apart. I saw my sister everyday...she was always around.

We both left the school at the same time. A little man came to the school in a Volkswagen. We were told that he was going to talk to us. We were standing around in a group, a bunch of us girls, and saying "We can't tell, we can't tell what happened here. We can't tell and we can't talk." Because we were scared of the nuns and we were told not to tell cause something bad might happen to us. There must have been an interview but I don't remember it. The school closed down shortly after this little guy came in the car.

You got up in the morning, then you prayed. Thank God or whatever for giving us this wonderful life! What a joke. Sometimes we went to church, sometimes we didn't. Then we'd go wash our faces on the lavable, in our little basin, brush our teeth, make up our bed, get our clothes on and go downstairs, line up two by two, to the dining room and sit at our respective tables with a nun at the head. All of us at our separate tables and they'd give us a bowl full of lumpy porridge with milk. We'd have breakfast and leave there two by two and line up for school. Then we'd go for lunch.

And we prayed lots then too because we had to pray before and after meals. Then we'd come back from school and we'd sit around that big main area and pray. We had to say the rosary beads. Sometimes we had to say the stations of the cross, but we'd have to line up and show our rosary beads...if we didn't have them, we'd get a beating. I remember that because I didn't have my rosary beads one day and they were doing inspection and my sister had hers, and they did the big ones first, and so they got passed down the line. My sister passed hers all the way down the line behind our backs...as the nun was coming so were the beads. We were real sneaky. We were real good at this. They got to me and I didn't know how they didn't catch on to how my sister and I just happened to have the same kind of rosary beads.

Afterwards, we'd go back to the refectory and have supper. Then they'd let us play...after supper...then we prayed again. We prayed a lot. When we got to go outside, we walked around four sidewalks. It was like four sidewalks and we'd walk around those because we were restricted to the four sidewalks. I remember that real well. Eventually we got swings in there and we swung on them. Once in awhile we got to sneak over to the boys' side and play with their things because they were fun. They were better than ours. They had the giant step we called it. I don't know what it was. It was a thing with chains hanging down in a row off this pole. You could fold it over and they swung you around to go real high. You'd have to hang on real tight. They were fun.

Then we had those things that little kids climb on...monkey bars. We got really good at those. We could do anything on that thing. We were good.

Once in awhile we got to play with the boys but not real often. We knew what boys were but I think we had to sneak to talk to them. I don't remember...I was pretty little and I didn't have much interest.

I can only remember having one friend, P, but that was only for a little while. I just stayed by myself. The other kids had friends, I think. Well there was always what we called a queen. She was the head of the girls, meaning she was THE best person there. She was the top person and you kissed her ass and that's all, Jack! I had forgotten about that until now.

Then we went to bed. It was early to bed and early to get up. At Christmastime, we got to go to midnight mass. I assumed that it was midnight, I don't know, I guess. We had to go to bed real early that night. They'd wake us up. That was kind of nice, cause they came in and they would sing Christmas carols and they had candles, I think. That was kinda nice...nice to get wakened up that way. Instead of the usual way...which was the bell.

I don't remember what school was like. I remember some days in school, not much. I know I was a smart kid. I passed a lot. But I got ripped off...I didn't get any special brownie points. For some reason though, the nuns didn't like to cut my hair because it was curly, which is ridiculous because my sister's hair was curly. They cut hers.

I was also sick. I was a sick kid. I had this heart thing and I remember them taking care of me and I used to think they were crazy. What were they doing that for? I remember this green dress. It was quilted. I really liked it because it was this quilted green dress and I never had one of them before. I remember we wore it everyday. It wasn't for sleeping, it was for wearing. Cause they were afraid I'd get cold and then get real sick.

When we'd get sick, they'd shuffle us off to this room over on the side of the building and you got to sleep there. This nun came out in the middle of the night with this cap on. We always wondered if she had hair. They were always covered. She wore this white cap and gave me medicine we'd go back to sleep.

Canteen was one of the positive things about residential school...and there weren't many! The priest would come with his little purple whiskey bag. Must have been a drunk! Yah, it was a little purple whiskey bag. They still have them...I think it's Seagram's or something...with yellow writing on it. It had money in it. He'd come once a week and give us our quarter, or whatever, our dime. Different ages...the older you are, the more money you get and then you'd get to buy candy at the canteen. They had it locked up in a little cupboard. In the summertime, if we got money or something, we got to go to Granny's store in Shaw's point. Go steal from Granny. Granny was cool. We called her Granny because she was old.

During the summer, some of the kids were adopted out. These white people would come there and they would line us all up...around our benches, and these white people would come down the line and look at us all...check us all out and then take one or two kids home with them. They were never really adopted, just taken. I don't know where they'd go. Some would come back...most of them came back. Today, I think it was a farce because I remember one girl telling me in the dorm that when she went, the guy that adopted he...that man told her that he loved her and she was really thrilled and so was I for her...that he told her he loved her, and that he sexually assaulted her. This was the way that he showed her that he loved her and if she did these things that would mean that he really loved her and she really loved him. She told me that she felt special, privileged. She felt like somebody really loved her. She bought into the bullshit. How can you not? That was the only form of love we ever got. The nuns were told not to get personally involved, and they never did!

They didn't talk to us much either: just to ask you what you did, if you were bad or something, before they spanked you. I got pretty cold living there.

When I left the residential school, I came to Edmonton. My sister and I got the bus. They stuck us on a Greyhound bus, probably at High Prairie. We got to Edmonton and we had these little suitcases with hardly anything in it. Nobody was there to meet us and it was like hell. Here we are, in this big city, and there ain't nobody here except us. That was freaky! Then my sister said, "Watch the suitcases," and she was going to find somebody. So she left me standing alone there in the bus depot. I was scared. Then some man came over and asked me if I was E. and I said, "yah." He said he was my brother-in-law...my sister's husband. I assumed that's who he was...that he was here to meet me... that my sister had been there but she thought that the bus didn't come or...she had some reason for not staying and it had to do with the bus. He found my sister or my sister found us, then he took us over to his place. To my sister's place...my older sister from hell!

We got to live with her for a year. I was twelve years old and I went to school from there. She was real mean. She put us down, same thing as the nuns did, so it was all old hat. She called us names, all the regular stuff. Fit right in with what we lived anyway.

Then a social worker came and asked me how I liked staying with my sister and my sister told me not to tell the social worker...here we go again...another lie. So I was supposed to not tell her but I told her I didn't like it there because my sister was mean to me. Then she moved me out of there to a foster home. They were okay. They weren't from hell.

I never really thought about the difference between the residential school, my sister's place and the foster home. I just put it right out of my mind and pretended it didn't exist. Everything was right put out of my mind...I was at this foster home and that's all, Jack! I'm here...I have to make the best of it and I'm here. This is where I have to stay now.

I hung out with a girl across the alley from the foster home. For the first little while I didn't hang out with any wild people, just with the girl from across the alley. She was a nice, friendly lady...girl, I mean. Got along with her really well. Her and I did everything together. My foster home was good. They tried to hug me and that was foreign to me. It was the worst thing they could do to me was to touch me...I would go stiff as a board. I figured I was sinning or something...committing this horrible sin if they touched me. I wouldn't let them touch me. They were not allowed to touch.

I was there for four years to age sixteen. I went to school and I found prejudice there. Everywhere I went I had a hard time! The told me I was a fuckin' squaw, that I was no good, all the regular stuff, which fits...it's right into where I came from, no problem, I can handle this...been there, done that!

I hung out with the wilder kids. They were fun...they accepted me for who I was. They didn't even look at me as being Indian, they just looked at me as being whoever I was. I got wild with them...I got drunk. I had fun with them. I liked doing what they were doing. I liked getting drunk even before I got drunk. It was like a fantasy. I don't even know where I'd seen people get drunk. It was my dream in life...my mission in life was to be drunk cause then I would be drunk and that was cool as far as I was concerned.

When I actually drank, I didn't remember it. I didn't remember nothing. They had given me some kind of...I don't know what the hell it was. They didn't give it to me, I took it and drank it...some kind of overproof stuff. I was told I went to the A & W with some people and that they had my head...face buried into a sink of water and I couldn't walk and all the regular things you get when you're really drunk...oh God, it was horrible. I had a blackout. I had no memory of that particular drunk. And then waking up at some guy's place, and I was still drunk.

No, that wasn't the first time I got drunk. I drank some wine at a Ukrainian wedding, cause Ukrainian people like to give you wine at their weddings. That was cool. I wasn't drunk but I was trying to get there. My foster brother ratted out on me...the asshole...stooly pigeon...and that was cool! I was getting sick anyway, and then there was one other time I got drunk. Yah, I got very drunk... I really liked this guy and I figured the way to get next to his heart was to get drunk. So I got really drunk with him...the memory just keeps slipping in and out... Him and seven other guys sexually...raped me. Before that happened though I just got drunk with this fuckin' bozo and I ended up in bed with him. I have no conscious memory...I guess he had taken my virginity...the pig dog... I hope he had fun! My life just went on like that where I'd just get drunk and fuck somebody and never have any memory of it... That was my life in a nutshell. Memories like that from then are just sort of...for some reason today, they just don't want to sit there...they just keep takin' off. It's just like I don't want to remember this. That was real painful. And my memory of guys was, if you sleep with them that means that they love you and you love them. Somewhere along the line, I got that message. It didn't matter what they did to you as long as they slept with you...then they loved you.

That fellow was the start of my wonderful relationships. I ended up charging him and the other guys, and he lied, naturally. I don't know any guy whose going to say "Yup, I sexually assaulted her." They were all real fun like that.

There was a lot of abuse. I got beaten...I got beaten a lot. I got called names. 'Fuckin' squaw' was a big one. One guy named me 'critter,' told me I chased cars and bit tires and shit like that. I was not impressed. It really hurt and I came out believing that I was the ugliest and the dumbest and everything else like that...human being that walked the planet...and it just fit back in with Grouard stuff.

What changed, that got me out of that pattern? I got into drugs. For awhile, drugs were fun. It was like "Wow, I've found a slice of heaven. Why isn't everybody doing these?" I don't get blackouts or anything...this is fun, I like this... What changed? I went to hell. That's what changed.

Imagine in your mind if you can, being in the worst possible place you can be, with the worst possible people, and feeling as much pain as can be thrown at you, multiplied by a million...you got hell! There's no way of escaping. There was a lot of violence. I had people beat on me, I had people try to kill me...scary...I had police try to shoot me...going to shoot me. I've had guns held on me. I've had knives taken after me, and if I said anything to anybody I would be called a stool pigeon and that would be the worst thing so I just kept myself there...cause I couldn't...there was no way out. The police didn't like me and all that left me with was the criminals and they didn't like me either.

The thing that finally kicked it off...the change...was...my old man and I had done some speed the night before and we were watching the police across the road watching us. We were getting our kicks cause there was no secret shit happening...it was all real. We knew it and it was paranoia, it was real. My daughter was home. She was fifteen, pregnant and we knew, we talked about it many days. We told K., "Look, the police are going to kick in this door anytime and they're going to come in with guns and we're going to be busted and taken to jail. So when that happens, don't be afraid...we're here." Big fuckin' deal! "And we just want to prepare you for that cause it's going to happen and it's a fact." Just before they came, I remember standing at the top of the stairs in this townhome I lived in and just screaming at her, "Don't you fuckin' see? Don't you fuckin' understand? Nothing changes, nothing ever fuckin' gets better. The best moment you've ever had in your life is fuckin' it! And we've never had any best moments in our fuckin' life!" and her staring at me and not understanding what I was saying and I was just screaming, and my old man standing there looking at me like "what the fuck is she on about?" I was feeling so much fear and so much pain. I just wanted to die. That's all...just die. Then shortly after that...it was 4:30 in the morning...we heard a loud bang...it was actually a crash. The light switch went on and my old man had a chance to sit up in bed and go for a weapon, which there weren't none there at the time. I had a chance to sit up and that was it. I looked up and then I saw guns all over the place, and I saw these big guys...oh they were big! I think they grow 'em special on some farm somewhere...they grow these guys on purpose...they feed 'em Corn Flakes or something. I don't know, but these guys were big. They had on those funny outfits and shield things. It looked like something out of a movie...that's what it looked like. I've got to be dreaming this...this is not happening here. It was happening here. I heard them holler "City Police, freeze!" In a way, I was kind of glad, you know. I thought "Thank God, it's you guys" and in another way I was terrified. They took P. and threw him on the floor and he was naked and they made him lay down on the floor. I went over to him to help him...I don't know what I thought I could do...it was just a reflex action. And I seen that gun...God...he moved it closer to my face and he just hollered freeze and I froze! The brought my daughter in and she said "I can't stay here. He has no clothes on," and she left. They cuffed us both and took us downstairs. They tore our house apart...I mean literally, tore our house apart and asked me where the drugs are and where are the guns. I said, "I don't know what you're talking about. We have no drugs." They kept insisting we did, so I give him my pills. He laughed at me, like you know, give me a break. The reason they'd done that was because a number of drugstores had been kicked in...there were armed robberies there...and, yes, we knew about it, had participated in it, all this is true. I didn't like the way they came in though...could have come in at six or something! They were looking for the guns that were used in the robbery and the drugs that were taken in the robbery. Neither of which we had. We were drug addicts...we ate 'em all! They were all gone...we were dope fiends. They don't last long.

They took us to jail and it was then, when I was laying in the Remand Center, that it kinda hit me...it's me the police want...they're protecting you guys from people like me...and that was really frightening. I thought, what the hell am I doing...what kind of life am I living here. This is crazy. I'm not a bad person and P.'s not a bad person...or I didn't think of us as bad. They were more after him. They took me anyway because I was with him and I knew... But sitting in the Remand Center, up in the cell, I had to make this bed up and had to turn the mattress down, fold it over...whatever the hell they did...and I had to make it up. As I was making it up, I noticed these rosary beads hanging there that I hadn't seen just a minute ago and I looked...where did they come from? They weren't there before and I thought, Oh God, this is a sign or something...this is a sign! I might have overlooked it but it sure was weird. The place they were put, I couldn't have missed them. So I asked the chick above me, "Are these yours?" She said "No, I've never seen those before." I finished making the bed and I held onto those things...and that's all I had.

I knew I had to go to court the next day and it was really strange cause in the morningtime I couldn't even get the lawyer from the courthouse to defend me. All he'd say was, "You're in here for too serious...your charges are too serious for me to even look at." He took P. but he would not take me. Figure that one out. Nothing much I could do. So they put it over to the afternoon for me and this lawyer, this really super good lawyer...a real good criminal lawyer at that time, the top criminal lawyer in Edmonton...happened to show up. He didn't just happen to, he was sent there by somebody that we knew, that was also involved in all this bullshit and that didn't get arrested. He was paid for already. He kinda came to my defense and I went up in front of this judge, this Judge Wong lady. He said, You're going up in front of the dragon lady." I asked, "What the hell does that mean?" and he said, "She's evil. She doesn't like people like you." She let me out on my own recognizance!

Interesting...this is really weird. I went back up to my cell to get my stuff cause I was out on my own OR and I left those rosary beads hanging there for the next person. I thought, well, this is cool...seemed to work for me... and I left 'em.

I think about a year later...takes a while for it to really sink in...a friend of mine decided to talk to me about those meetings. I thought she was out to lunch and cuckoo. She told me that there were people there from the street that I might know but wouldn't tell me who. Well, I got real curious. I hate anybody giving me part of a story...I want to know the whole thing...so I got sort of conned into going to Narcotics Anonymous meetings and I never left.

It's been eight years now and I've been straight ever since. Things just started to change after I started going to those meetings, for some reason. I hated them. I hated what people did...I hated the games they were playing...I just hated them. But after awhile, I got kinda used to them...comfortable being there. I never felt like I belonged there and this was home...that I had found THE ANSWER or anything like that. It never did any of those things for me but it was something and I've stayed straight. But then I was feeling some more despair and my sister...out of the blue...I just love that girl some days... She drags over this Native guy and we started talking to him. It turns out he was going to sweats and shit like that. That was really neat.

He said he would take us to some if we wanted to go. He explained a lot about the Native culture to me cause I didn't know and he knew I didn't know. That was obvious! I picked his brain and picked his brain and picked his brain until he told me everything he could tell me, and he took us to sweats. Then I found a place where I was home...then, I found where I was supposed to be.

It felt good...really good. I finally found somebody that I could relate to, somebody that had the same feelings that I had, that had been through the same experiences that I had, thought like me, that talked like me...just another part of me.

I met him about two years ago, maybe two and a half. He was told by an Elder that he'd be going someplace beyond the sweat, and it was our place he was supposed to go to. He really helped me...he's since died. It broke my heart. But he left me with a real nice thing. Since then...I don't know...my spirituality has really got better...starting to understand a lot more things and I see all of the shit before as...not all of it...I see some of the stuff that happened before as just shit and abuse, and I see that I don't have to live like that anymore.

I thought, before, that I had been put here for one reason, that God put me here for one reason...to see how much one human being could suffer before they died, and I really believed that! I really, really believed that. But not anymore. I don't believe in that God...the one that Grouard had...that was going to zap me with lightning bolts and I was going to hell just cause I was Indian. All those awful things and I don't believe that...I don't buy into that! That's bullshit!

Now I have found peace...I have something real, and for the first time in my life, I have found a safe place. I never had a safe place until just a little bit ago. I had a dream one night. I have many dreams, but in that dream I dreamt I was in this cave. I went to check it out and I went in the front door cause there were two doors. I was looking around...it looked like a man-made cave...I was in there and I felt really warm...really safe. I looked over to one side and I seen these pups playing and they ran over towards a pile of rocks where they turned into rocks. So I told my dream to a medicine man or an Elder or whatever you want to call him...medicine man, and he just said, "That wasn't a cave, that was a sweatlodge and one of your spirit guides, like one of your animal spirit guides...coyotes." And that's my safe place, that sweat. When I get freaked out about something, I go there...in my head. In my mind, I go there.

It was wonderful. So now I got some coyotes as animal guides. At the end of the dream, the rocks came up really close...like a close-up shot of the rocks...and they had given me some colors. My colors were given to me.

I met my husband six years ago at a meeting. He came out of the crowd at a meeting. I looked over and the first thing I thought was bush person. My second thing, almost at the same time, was an old biker. I thought this was cool. We were both pretty well new at the program. I was standing with my friend. I wanted to go for a cigarette...she was busy, so she couldn't go outside with me, so she asked G. He said "sure, I'll take her outside for a cigarette," like I was some little kid or something! I went with him and I knew, I just knew, that this was the guy I was going to spend the rest of my life with, and I don't know how, but I just knew that. I married him a year later.

At first, our relationship was from hell. This guy was out to lunch...I was out to lunch. I hate relationships that just start out like that. He was half crazed...so was I. When you get two half-crazed people together that makes for total insanity, and it did. He was used to having his own way, period. This is how things are done and that's all! I'm not used to...I don't like being told what to do. We had a relationship from hell. We slowly got over that part from hell.

He's a smart man. He used to tell me, for instance, to pick things up things I'd leave around, and to me, he was just a pain in the ass. Stuff like that...little things made him crazy...made me crazy for him telling me. But that's what I was like...a slob...I didn't care. I was used to being a slob. When you go to hell you become a slob, or I did...and I was scared of him. He had this big booming voice. It freaked me out, but at the same time I knew...I saw something else there besides that big booming voice and that real mean looking person. For some reason, I was able to look past that and see him as a different kind of person...this really good person...but to hear him talk... Then he slowly started to become the good person that I saw to start with. He mellowed out lots.

Recovery helped change him, and me. It took lots of time. It took both of us talking about how we were feeling. We used to have little mini-meetings just between him and I. We'd tell each other how we're feeling today...what does this program mean to us...where we're at today. We did it because we were interested...we just did it...it just came.

He says he doesn't tell me everything. I definitely do not tell him everything. Some things in life are secret, some things that are told to me in confidence...sorry, but they're told to me in confidence. But I do share with him most everything. We have our ups and downs but we also have a lot in common. We like doing the same things. He's weird...he's like me.

We get along. It's really nice and he's not abusive...he doesn't beat on me...not like that. That's nice. He can tell me something in one way, and he's yelling at me, or I figure he's yelling at me...he's trying to help me but I look at it as yelling at me. He's not yelling, he's telling me something, but I don't like that big booming voice some days. Makes me feel small. I turn around and talk about it with my close friend and sponsor. He'll tell me the same thing and it's like lights go on everywhere, and I go back to G. and say "Hey, do you know what?" and he'll say "For fuck sake! I told you the same thing...just in different words." He sees through me easily. It's scary but at the same time, it's good. I can't pull one over on him...just can't. I like that. I think he knows me better than I know me somedays. I know a lot about him...yah, I know him real well.

Then there's my poor daughter whose suffered hell all her life, poor child. I don't know how she's survived it. When she got growed up...I say growed up at the ripe old age of fifteen...and got pregnant and gave that baby away. That was a hard thing for her to do, but she did it anyway and her life went on and more hell set in and she got into a relationship like the one I was in. She followed what I was doing...she lived my life. She was living my life! She got into cocaine abuse...she got into booze in a big way. Holy shit...she was living my life. It was scary. I used to freak, thinking that this child was going to die. Back then the only positive thing that happened for her...she got into Native modeling and that was really good...seeing those young ladies strutting their stuff...it was really good. That was positive but it only lasted a little bit and she got bored again...that was K.

But hey, her life has changed. G. and I used to talk to her all the time, tell her stuff. She'd always ignore us...she's another me...weird kid. She told me to "Fuck off, mom. You don't know what the hell you're talking about, and you don't know anything, and nobody could possibly understand what I'm going through." I used to get so frustrated. One day she brought her friend over about a year ago, last winter, and they went out to the bar. She came home and she was having anxiety attacks. I seen it coming all along and it was good. I was glad it was happening to her and she asked me "Why?" and I said "Because it's time." I didn't even know why I said it. I didn't know what it was time for, all I knew was that I was supposed to say that and that it came from the heart not from the head.

That poor child went through psychiatrists and told them to go to hell...psyche wards...and she told them to go to hell, pills, antidepressants...she told them to "fuck off, it's garbage. What are you trying to do, kill me?" Yah, she was choked...she hated 'em. She came here once.

Then one day we were trottin' off to the sweat and we took her to the sweat. That was where she met L. It was really weird. I don't believe in coincidences, I really don't. L. was there and they hit it off like that. They connected right now. I was supposed to phone L. for something and I did, L. being a medicine man. He's asking all sorts of questions about K. and G. is freaking out saying "Don't answer, for fuck sakes!" ...going through all these changes and paranoia.

He ended up talking to her for about one and a half hours on the telephone and I thought, Right on. I don't know what this is about but this is cool Then he ended up taking her with him and told her he didn't know why but he felt as though he had to share with her everything he knew...his knowledge...he was going to teach her. She was the one...he was supposed to teach her.

So he took her out and they did things together... picked medicine...shit like that, stuff like that...and he taught her. They went to different places...they went to healing sweats. He went doctoring...she went with him. Stuff like that and things started to change. When she came home that first time, if you never believed in miracles before, you would have seen it that day when she walked in the door. She was only gone three, four, maybe five days. Her face was lit up...there was life in her eyes. I don't know what happened out there but was it ever good. She felt good inside and she's been working with L. ever since. And she's getting better, she's growing quickly, very quickly, and people all over are noticing the change.

She's talking to me grown-up now. She fought everything we said before...now she's agreeing with things we say. She's still going to have to deal with a lot of stuff...that's good, but she's started to heal. My daughter's growing up. She's becoming whole...we all are. It's so good. I never would have thought. My dream for her was to follow in my path that way...might as well follow in my path this way. She went ahead a little quicker...pisses me off! I'm sorry, but I can't help but get a little jealous...you know...I just can't. She's learning the Native culture way quicker than I ever could. Way, way quicker. Hey, that girl knows more stuff than I ever dreamed...

I learned my lesson well. I grew up thinking I was white, She was mad at me...gave me shit for not teaching her the old ways. I can't teach her something I don't know. I'm sorry, but I can't. That was kind of drilled out of me...they tried to make me white...believing I was white, talking, acting like I was white, everything...except that I wasn't. I wasn't being true to who I am.

My father is deceased and my mother is stuck in some kind of weird place. She's grown up believing, I guess, that whatever a man does, it's okay, period. No matter what he does, and I mean that...that runs big, use your imagination...it's okay. Women are dirt and that's pretty well where my mom is coming from and it's really hard to deal with her cause she's like that...going through extreme paranoia...thinks everyone is going to rob her. So she's really hard to get along with.

Some of my siblings are in the States, some are in the city. I don't really know them, not that well. I know my sister S., not even that well anymore. She's into the criminal life...and I'm sorry, I don't want to go there. She works, but...

It's kind of sad, you know. I wish that they could all find what I've found. Cause I see them, the ones I do see sometimes, I see...I don't know what that is in their eyes...it ain't good. They're not happy...there's no peace inside for them. They're still tormented by Grouard...the ones that were there. It's really very hard to deal with that stuff. I've only told you a tiny bit about Grouard. I can't talk about it...my stomach is really sore. I can only tell little bits and pieces of it, and I'm sorry...it's nervous breakdown time.

We were told that people were killed there. I don't know this for a fact. I was told about sexual abuse there. I talked to one of the guys from there...my brothers or D., the guys had said though some of the guys were being sexually abused. What happened to the girls, I don't remember. Good thing, eh?

They put you down there...they put you down. A lot of verbal abuse...called us every scuzzy name they could think of and had us believing them. They used to line us up and say, "Show 'em your undies." Why? We had to bath in dirty water. There were so many girls, we had to go line up two by two...and they'd run the tub and the first however many kids would get in and then the second batch and then more after that. We would bathe in their water. They did neat things like that to us.

There was fighting amongst the kids in there...shit, I used to get beat up all the time. I got a black eye once for arguing with this little girl across the table from me. Yah, she was mean...that chick hit hard...she gave me a black eye. Nobody protected me... It was a cold place.

We had to protect each other from the nuns, though. We were really afraid of them. Maybe we were afraid of each other but we were more afraid of the nuns. They could do more damage.

I didn't have a clue what it was to be a mother! I had to have a nurse at the Royal Alex show me how to change a diaper, for God's sakes!

I didn't know how to be a mom...I didn't know how to be a wife...I didn't know fuck all about other people. I grew up really angry, really bitter and twisted. There's a lot of things I just plumb don't know about...a lot of things you guys take for granted. I don't know because I was never taught. What I was taught was how to be violent. I was taught that I was the worst scum of the earth on this planet. I was taught how to pray. Big deal...for all the good it did me...and I was taught how to be inferior. Those are the things I was taught.

G. thinks that the maternal instinct comes naturally...I say Bullshit. It does not! Some of us are farther removed from that than other people. I do not have any skills at all when it comes to parenting. I do not have a clue. I don't know! I learn as I go and even then I'm wondering. That affects my daughter in a really negative way. I taught her how to grow up and be not trusting, be mean, how to be afraid, how to be punched out on a regular basis. I taught her all those things...all those negative things.

I didn't know nothing about coping except my survival skills. Those kick in bigtime and I'm sure if my daughter was watching, she learned how, too.

I just accepted the violence in my relationships...that was part of life. I didn't have a clue about relationships. I thought relationships, man/woman relationships at first were...well, we get together and now we go visit someone. That's it...that's all I knew...that's what I thought it was about. I didn't know what to do. So I got taught real quick that if you're in a relationship that means you got beat on. I passed that on to my daughter. She did it too. She learned to cope with booze. I learned with booze and drugs. How else do you cope with situations like that?

Now, I go to sweats. Those other things aren't happening to me. I don't have to cope with that anymore. I'm not there.

But I still have a lot of fears, built right inside of me. Lots of anger...lots and lots of anger. All kinds, and hey, they don't just go away overnight. I was telling my friend that if I was to let all of this anger out at one time, I would kill somebody without a second thought, and I would be an extremely dangerous person to myself, as well as to other people. But behind this anger is a lot of pain...why else would there be anger? I don't know how to put aside all those Grouard things. That didn't happen to me just one day...it happened to me over five or six fuckin' years! A long time, yah...so there's a lot in there that needs to come out...but I can't do it all in one day. I'm sorry, I can't. It is too much. It's gotten less...way less, but it's still there though.

But I would be a liar if I said it wasn't true. I learned how to hate God, and how to hate white people, and I learned how not to trust. Those are good skills! And those are the skills I passed on to my kid.

In conclusion, about the only thing I'd really like to add is...I would really like people to understand where people like me are coming from...that we have a lot of

anger but it's not directed at anyone personally. Even though it's brought out that way at times, it's not personal. It's really hard for us to deal with that shit...it's really hard for us to talk about that stuff...really hard for me to talk about that stuff. I would like them to just know that there was a hell that existed in Grouard, and that we didn't deserve it. Not all the apologies on the planet ain't going to make it no different...there ain't no sum of money that'll change it. In fact, that's insulting.
I just want for people to understand, just for people to know that this happened, and just to believe it for the first time. To believe that what we say is real...that it really happened.